Denver Rocky Mountain News

Most awards in Colorado for the fourth straight year

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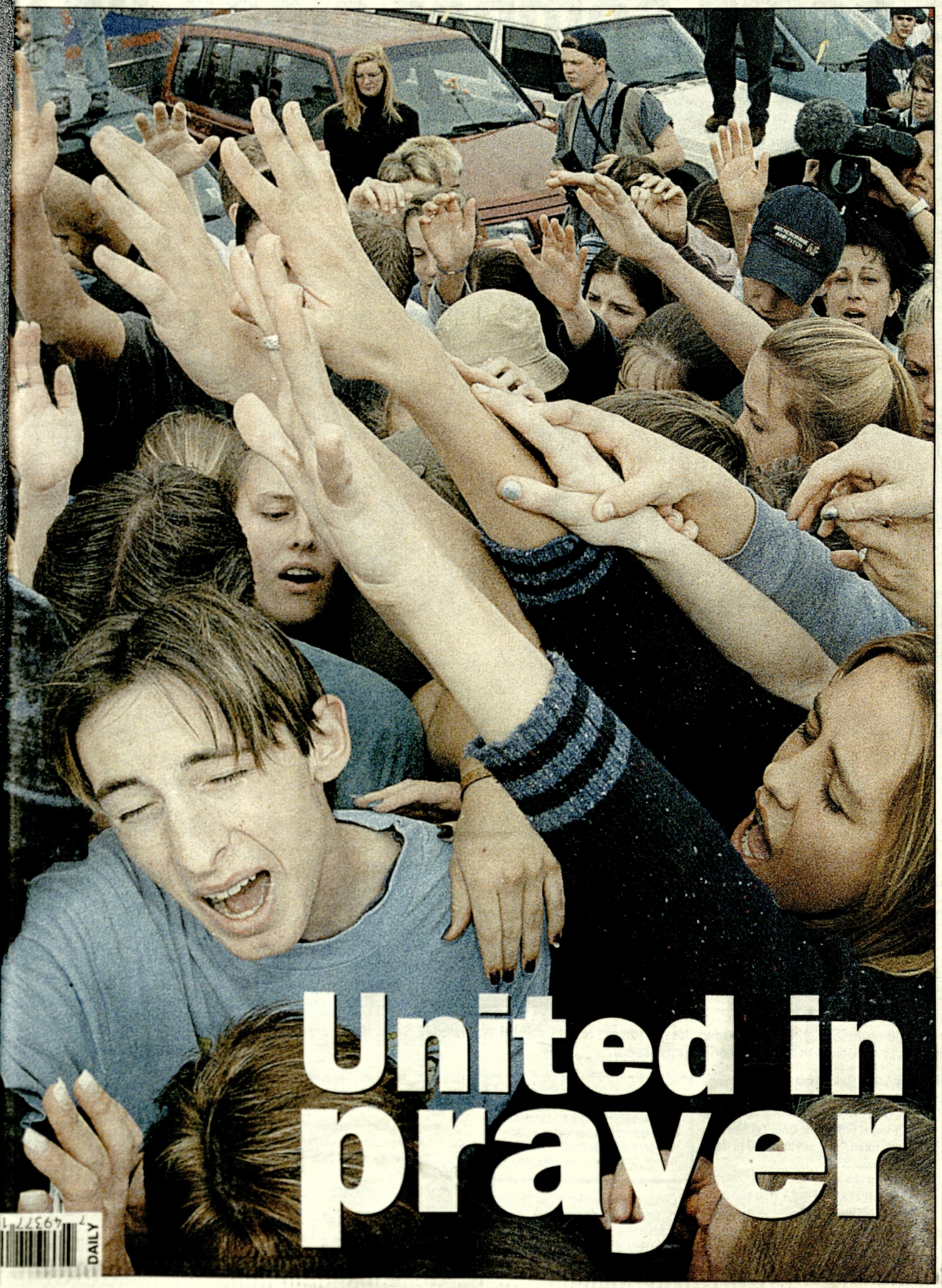


United in prayer

FROM THE PUBLISHER

A letter to our community

I write as the publisher of this newspaper, but also as a longtime member of this community and the father of two children educated in public schools, one who became a teacher.

In this time of terrible grief, so many of us are looking for ways to help the victims of the tragedy at Columbine High School. We have received numerous phone calls from readers asking us to provide guidance on what to do to help.

It's up to the community to decide what needs to be done. It's up to the families served by Columbine and the residents of the Jefferson County school district to tell their school board what they want done.

If students, teachers and parents feel there is no way they can return to the classrooms of Columbine, the *Denver Rocky Mountain News* will lead the charge to raise the funds to build a new school and urge legislators to help.

If they decide that they do not want to be driven from their school, we will support the community in rebuilding the campus.

Whatever their decision, this newspaper will support them.

CONTINUED ON 2AA

TRAGEDY AT COLUMBINE

"I've seen looks on faces and heard tones in voices that I haven't seen or heard in my 20 years here." – Jefferson County sheriff's deputy Steve Davis

Police begin somber clean-up

Authorities remove bodies, clear bombs one day after assault

By Mike Anton
News Staff Writer

First came the bombs, then the bodies. But on Wednesday what had still not emerged from the scene of the deadliest school shooting in American history was a reason for why it happened.

Police using robots and bomb-sniffing dogs found nearly 30 explosive devices in a painstaking search of Columbine High School where, on Tuesday, 15 people died and 23 were wounded in an assault by two heavily armed students.

As evening fell, they carried out the dead, who had been left where they fell overnight for fear they might be booby-trapped.

The procession capped a day of grief as thousands of mourners packed churches, fashioned memorials and met with counselors.

"I've seen looks on faces and heard tones in voices that I haven't seen or heard in my 20 years here," said Jefferson County sheriff's Deputy Steve Davis.

At the school, police found bombs in classrooms, backpacks, cars and under the long black trench coats worn by the killers, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, Columbine seniors who shot themselves in the head as SWAT teams closed in Tuesday.

Authorities also continued seeking a motive, the source of the weapons and whether anyone else was involved. Up to 10 possible suspects will be questioned.

Fifteen people remained hospitalized, four in critical condition.

"This will be a long and involved investigation," Jefferson County District Attorney Dave Thomas said. "There may be people who were at least knowledgeable about this."

Thomas downplayed a racial motive for the killings, despite reports from survivors who said that Klebold, 17, and Harris, 18, were targeting minorities.

"It appears to me that most of the victims were victims because of where they were at the time, not because they were sought out," Thomas said, adding that he had no evidence the bloodbath was timed to coincide with the anniversary of Adolf Hitler's April 20 birthday.

A preliminary roster of the dead supported his view: Twelve students, one teacher. Nine males, four females. One black.

"I don't know what the motive is other than anger," Thomas said. "I really don't."

Authorities said they also didn't know what, if anything, the assailants' association with a group of student outcasts known as the Trench Coat Mafia had to do with the rampage.

"A lot of kids wear black clothes and wear Doc Martens," Thomas said. "I don't want to put too much into this."

Added Jefferson County Sheriff John Stone: "I've never heard of this group before."

Nevertheless, members were being interviewed and a Web site and e-mail pertaining to the group had been seized.

"This is not something they did overnight," Stone said. "This took a lot of planning."

Essdras M Suarez/News Staff Photographer

A Columbine High School student kisses Rachel Scott's car on Wednesday. Scott died during Tuesday's shootings at the Jefferson County school.

CORRECTION

An article on Page 6A Wednesday incorrectly reported that Zach Heckler was a member of the Trench Coat Mafia. He was not.

Columbine teacher Cheryl Lucas said she and others had warned administrators about Klebold and Harris and their potential for violence but were ignored.

"We weren't expecting anything this bad," she said. "But we did see signs that these kids were disturbed."

Teachers knew about the student's Web pages, about how "they write hate stories and hate letters," Lucas said.

And they reported their concerns, she said.

"But as long as their threats are general enough, nothing much can happen," Lucas said. "There's nothing that permits us to take action based on signs."

From sunrise to sunset and into the night Wednesday, hundreds of grieving students descended on Clement Park, which adjoins the Columbine campus. They came for support, to cry in each other's arms, to pray for the victims and to search for answers. Haley Moe captured the crowd's incomprehension with a 7-year-old's simplicity.

See COLUMBINE on 3AA

FROM THE PUBLISHER

A letter to our community

Continued from Page 1

In the meantime, we will lead the drive to raise the funds for a memorial that reflects the desires of the victims and their families. Another fund has already been established by the United Way to meet immediate needs. Contributions to that fund can be sent to The Healing Fund, P.O. Box 46531, Denver, 80201.

This nation has seen the healing powers of the Vietnam Memorial wall in Washington, D.C., and the grass field in Oklahoma City where the Alfred P. Murrah building once stood. If the Columbine community wishes a serene place open to the Colorado sky, this newspaper will help see that its dreams are realized.

I am confident that the citizens of this state and caring people from around the country and even the world will support them. The News is making a $25,000 contribution to seed the campaign.

If you would like to help raise funds for the memorial, please mail your contributions to the Columbine Memorial Fund in care of the Jefferson Foundation, 809 Quail, Building 1, Lakewood, 80215.

Thank you.

Larry Strutton
Publisher

ON THE COVER

Justin Boggus, 17, of Bear Creek High School leads a group of students from Columbine High and other schools in prayer and song Wednesday near West Bowles Avenue and South Pierce Street.

TRAGEDY AT COLUMBINE

Sponsors will let 2 major gun bills die

Measures would have eased concealed-weapons permits, superseded local ordinances

By Dan Luzadder and John Sanko
News Staff Writers

The bitter legislative fight over two major gun bills ended abruptly Wednesday when sponsors decided to let them die.

Both were days from going to Gov. Bill Owens.

Owens said he will veto a third bill, SB 205, which has passed the House and Senate. That bill prohibits local communities from suing firearms manufacturers for liability when guns are used to kill.

Before the announcements, House Majority Leader Doug Dean, R-Colorado Springs, insisted that the gun bills — SB 84, which expanded the concealed-weapons permit system, and HB 1305, which superseded local gun ordinances — have nothing to do with the tragedy at Columbine High.

But less that two hours later, Dean threw in the towel — in part due to hundreds of phone calls to lawmakers and Owens' office, some saying that lawmakers would have "blood on their hands" over relaxing concealed-weapons laws.

"We met with the governor, and he agreed that in this environment there is no reason to revisit this divisive debate over firearms," Dean said.

Dean lost a gun bill in the Senate two weeks ago after a public outcry over provisions that would allow concealed weapons in public schools.

During House debate on that bill, he had argued that an armed teacher in a school where shootings had occurred could possibly have prevented killings.

Dean said he had received "veiled threats" from callers at work and at home Tuesday and Wednesday. He broke down in tears outside the House chamber, sobbing, as he talked about that.

"Many of (the callers) are saying that I am to blame for this happening," he said. "I don't understand . . . it makes you think."

Dean said he asked the El Paso County Sheriff's Department for security for his children at school Wednesday and requested extra security at the Statehouse in the wake of those calls.

The gun bills had split Democrats and Republicans along party lines, with Democrats warning that the concealed-weapons measures would lead to a further proliferation of guns in Colorado.

House Minority Leader Ken Gordon, D-Denver, who had been at the forefront of the fight against the bills, seemed relieved.

"I've been against the bills from the beginning, and nothing that happened yesterday changed my mind," he said. "More guns are not the answer to gun violence."

George Kochaniec Jr./News Staff Photographer

Law enforcement officers scour the grounds just south of Columbine High School on Wednesday for evidence from Tuesday's shootings.

Flowers placed on makeshift memorials

COLUMBINE from 2AA

"I wouldn't have thought two men would just come into a school and kill people," she said.

Bleary-eyed and shell-shocked, they placed flowers in makeshift memorials, passed out ribbons and put up hand-lettered signs.

"I hope you have fun in heaven," read one addressed to Isaiah Shoels, a student who died.

Also in the crowd were parents still waiting for word of their children, waiting for the bodies to be brought out.

"One parent said they'd gladly walk by the bombs just to pick up their child's body," sheriff's deputy Troy Betka said.

Klebold and Harris were described by some who knew them as bright, normal kids. Others described them as depressed and angry. Kids from upper-middle class, two-parent families who had only one brush with the law before killing 13 people: A car break-in.

"They were the sweetest kids on the face of the earth," said Kristen Thiebault, a friend who spoke at a prayer session at Light of the World Catholic Church. "All of our friends are trying to figure out how this could have happened."

But one of Harris' Internet postings contained this chilling passage:

"I live in Denver, and I would love to kill almost all of its residents. You all better hide in your houses, because I'm coming for everyone and I will shoot to kill, and I will kill everything."

The families of both suspects issued statements expressing their sympathy to the victims and their horror over the killings.

Attorney General Janet Reno is expected to fly to Denver today . The National Rifle Association shortened its convention, set for Denver next week. The Colorado Avalanche postponed the first two games of its playoff series. The Colorado Rockies postponed a second game. State lawmakers withdrew concealed-weapons bills — bills that had been close to approval.

Gov. Bill Owens declared the school a state disaster area, pledged $1 million and created a task force to help support victims and their families.

"Even in the face of this unspeakable horror, we live in a state where people come together in times of crisis," Owens said.

Owens also announced a memorial service at 10 a.m. Sunday in Clement Park. All U.S. and Colorado flags will be flown at half-staff until the victims have been buried.

Schools in Denver and Jefferson County were closed Wednesday. All reopen today after security sweeps — except for Columbine, which may remain shut for the rest of the school year.

Columbine's faculty gathered Wednesday to console each other.

"This was a great school before this," principal Frank DeAngelis said. "And it will be a great school after this."

Staff Writers Kevin Vaughan, Mark Wolf, Bill Scanlon, Carla Crowder, Deborah Frazier and John Sanko also contributed to this report.

NRA curtails convention

But Webb pushes group to cancel all functions

By Kevin Flynn
News Staff Writer

The National Rifle Association on Wednesday severely curtailed its national convention in Denver next week out of "profound sympathy and respect" for victims of the Columbine High School shooting.

But Denver Mayor Wellington Webb wants the group to cancel its meeting entirely and urged citizens to wage a call-in campaign.

"Everyday people can make a difference," Webb said. "They can call the NRA. Get the 800 number off the billboards and call them and tell them not to come to Denver."

Coincidentally, an NRA billboard along West Colfax Avenue advertising its convention was taken down Wednesday.

In a letter to NRA members Wednesday, President Charlton Heston and the group's executive vice president, Wayne LaPierre, said all seminars, workshops, luncheons, exhibits by gun makers and other vendors, and festivities are canceled.

All that's left is a members' reception with Rep. J.C. Watts, R-Okla., and the annual meeting, set for 10 a.m. May 1 in the Colorado Convention Center.

The NRA convention April 30-May 2 was expected to draw 22,000 members and give the city a $17.9 million economic boost.

Heston, meanwhile, told ABC News Wednesday that there should be armed guards in the nation's schools.

"If there had been even one armed guard in the school, he could have saved a lot of lives and perhaps ended the whole thing instantly," Heston said.

An armed Jefferson County sheriff's deputy was at Columbine when the shooting started Tuesday. He exchanged fire with one of the gunmen.

Heston also said the school erred by allowing the gunmen and other students to wear black trench coats to school.

"Come on. That's outrageous in a school," Heston said. "I'm afraid you have to blame the parents of those two boys."

TRAGEDY AT COLUMBINE

Girl survives nine bullets

Wounded kids recovering from massacre at school

By Tina Griego
News Staff Writer

Nicole Nowlen carries five little reminders of a day she would rather forget. Five .38-caliber bullets, lodged in her torso, there to stay.

"The doctors say they'll probably work themselves out someday," said her grandfather, Tom Nowlen as Nicole napped.

Nicole Nowlen was one of 23 people wounded in Tuesday's shooting rampage at Columbine High School. The two student gunmen killed 13 people before killing themselves, police said.

Of the 23 wounded by gunshots and shrapnel, eight are now home. Four students remained in critical condition Wednesday with multiple gunshot wounds. The rest were stable, recovering in one of five area hospitals.

"He's gonna be OK," said Rick Castaldo, whose 17-year old son, Richard, was shot at least four times, and who also will be left with one bullet inside him.

Richard Castaldo never knew what hit him, his father said. The teen-ager took bullets in his back, chest, left arm and the left side of his neck. During a six-hour operation, doctors removed a vein from his leg and spliced it into his arm.

Doctors are optimistic Richard will have full use of his hand, good news for a boy who has been playing the saxophone for six years and who recently took up the tuba.

Doctors also removed his shattered spleen. They say it will be at least 8 weeks before they know whether Richard will suffer any lasting damage.

Late Tuesday, Richard was lying in bed with tubes "in his nose, throat, neck, stomach, everywhere," his father said.

By Wednesday afternoon, the tube was removed from his throat.

"He's in good shape considering he was shot up less than 24 hours ago," Castaldo said.

Mark Kintgen, a 17-year-old who was trapped in the library, is also doing better, said his identical twin brother, Mike. Mark was shot in the neck and head.

"He remembers what happened entirely," said Mike.

So does Nicole Nowlen. Nicole has only been a student at Columbine for two weeks. Like Mike Kintgen, she was in the library.

"She was hiding under a table," her grandfather said. "She saw the face of the shooter. He shot her nine times and then said to the boy next to her, 'Are you still breathing?' and shot him again in the head.

"Nicole blacked out or she is sure she would have been shot again."

But she still wants to go back to school at Columbine, Tom Nowlen said.

"She says she wants to stay," he said. "She's a fighter. She told me, 'I'm not going to let them beat me.' "

STATEMENTS OF REGRET

From the family of gunman Eric Harris:

"We want to express our heartfelt sympathy to the families of all the victims and to all the community for this senseless tragedy. Please say prayers for everyone touched by these horrible events.

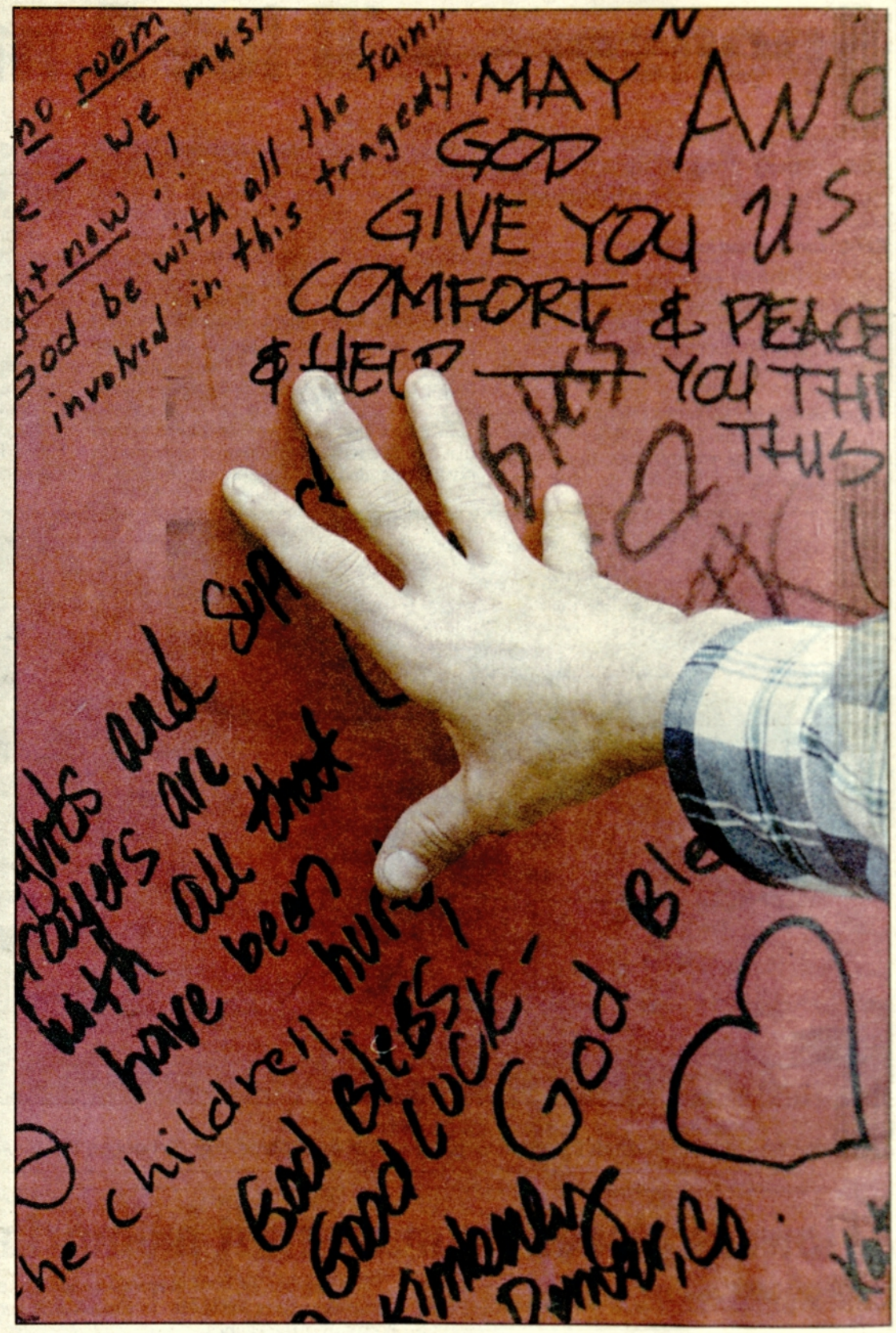
The Harris family is devastated by the deaths of the Columbine High students and is mourning the death of their youngest son, Eric.

(They are) requesting that the media respect their privacy and refrain from contacting any family member. No further statements will be made to the press and no media interviews will be granted.

From the family of Dylan Klebold:

"We cannot begin to convey our overwhelming sense of sorrow for everyone affected by this tragedy. Our thoughts, prayers and heartfelt apologies go out to the victims, their families, friends, and the entire community.

Like the rest of the country, we are struggling to understand why this happened, and ask that you please respect our privacy during this painful grieving period.



Essdras M Suarez/News Staff Photographer

At Civic Center Park in Denver, the hand of Littleton resident Bruce Crossar reaches out to touch messages written on a giant card sending good wishes to survivors and their families.

HOSPITALIZED

Here's a list of 23 people hospitalized after the school shooting and their conditions; not all had gunshot wounds. It was compiled Wednesday from hospital officials.

SWEDISH MEDICAL CENTER

Valerie Schnurr, 18, fair and stable with nine shrapnel and bullet wounds with injuries to the chest, abdomen and left arm.

Anne Marie Hochhalter, 17, critical condition with gunshot wounds to chest and liver.

Sean Graves, 15, critical condition with a gunshot wound to the back.

Richard Castaldo, 17, serious condition with multiple gunshot wounds to chest, back and arm.

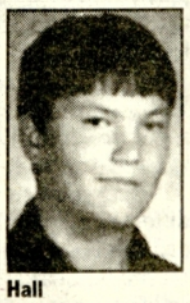
Lutheran Medical Center

Brian Anderson, 17, treated and released with superficial wound to the chest when a gunman shot through a double-paned window.

Nicole Nowlen, 16, treated and released with gunshot wounds to the abdomen.

UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

Male, 16, serious but stable condition with gunshot wounds to the chest, arms and one leg.


Hall

Ireland

Kintgen

Kreutz

Park

DENVER HEALTH MEDICAL CENTER

Mark Kintgen, 17, serious condition with multiple gunshot wounds to his neck and head.

Lance Kirklin, 16, critical condition with multiple gunshot wounds to his body, intensive care.

Lisa Kreutz, 18, serious condition with multiple gunshot wounds to her body, intensive care.

Jeanna Park, 18, fair condition with gunshot wounds to lower extremities.

CENTURA LITTLETON ADVENTIST HOSPITAL

Dan Steepleton, 17, good condition with a gunshot wound to the knee.

Jennifer Doyle, 17, good condition with shotgun pellets to hand.

Stephen Austin Eubanks, 17, treated and released with gunshot wounds to the head and knee.

Stephanie Munson, 17, treated and released with a gunshot wound to the ankle.

Adam Kyler, 16, treated and released with abdominal pain.

Nick Foss, 18, treated for injuries from a 15-foot fall.

Patricia Nielson, 35, teacher, treated and released for a chest wound.

Joyce Jankowski, 45, teacher, treated and released for anxiety.

CENTURA ST. ANTHONY CENTRAL HOSPITAL

Casey Ruegsegger, 17, serious condition with gunshot wounds.

Makai Hall, 19, fair condition with gunshot wounds.

Patrick Ireland, 17, serious condition with gunshot wounds.

Male, 15, critical condition with gunshot wounds.

— By staff and wire

TRAGEDY AT COLUMBINE

Michael Shoels said he had a feeling the night of the shootings that his son, Isaiah, was one of the fatalities.

Ken Papaleo/News Staff Photographer

Gunshots end senior's dream

Student wanted to be music exec; family says warnings ignored

By April M. Washington
News Staff Writer

Isaiah Shoels, who dreamed of becoming a music executive, was shot in the head and killed Tuesday by two schoolmates who had boasted of targeting minority students.

Shoels was the only minority among the 13 killed by the pair.

Shoels

His parents, Vonda and Michael Shoels, grappled with his death Wednesday, but also with the belief that school officials had ignored their complaint that their son was being threatened by the Trench Coat Mafia.

Betty Hooks, Isaiah's aunt, said Wednesday that the family believes the 18-year-old senior would still be alive had school officials investigated the complaint.

"We are angry about the whole situation," said Hooks, 44, of northeast Denver. "The school should have looked into what the children were telling them about the racism. But they chose to cover up these kinds of issues."

Kay Pride, spokeswoman for the Jefferson County School District, said the complaint would not have been ignored had it gone to the principal.

> *"It's been a really tough and difficult day."*
>
> **Harold Berry,**
> a lifelong friend of the Shoels family

Hooks said the Shoelses' 15-year-old daughter, Michelle, had delivered the complaint to a school official. She said the official told Michelle that the school had no racial problems.

"We have strong beliefs and values in the school district that all people should be treated with respect," Pride said. "Harassment is not allowed. There are forceful district policies and federal and state laws that support the behavior we would like to see."

Pride insisted that the violence that took Shoels' life was random.

"You can take every reasonable step to make a positive environment for everyone, but sometimes human nature will defeat you," she said.

"Columbine has an outstanding record on these issues. We regret the parents are concerned about the situation their daughter mentioned. We would like to address the concerns."

The Shoelses were in mourning Wednesday and had no comment.

"Isaiah's mother is taking this real hard," said Harold Berry, a lifelong friend of the family. "It's been a really tough and difficult day."

Friends left each other in library

By Steve Caulk
News Staff Writer

The last time Landon Jones Jr. saw Corey Depooter was Tuesday at the Columbine High School library, where Depooter had his head buried in research material.

Depooter looked up as Jones left for lunch and told Jones, "See ya later."

He never did.

Twenty minutes later, the school was under attack and the library was the site of a massacre.

As of Wednesday afternoon, Depooter, 17, was missing and some family and friends had lost hope that he might miraculously show up.

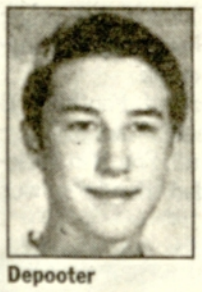
"We know he's dead," said his father, Neal. "We know. We knew at 4 o'clock yesterday."

Depooter's sister, 15-year-old Jenna, escaped from the school unharmed. The family spent most of Wednesday huddled in their split-level home less than a mile from the school, waiting for word.

Quietly, slowly, Neal Depooter described his son as an all-American boy. He stood on the front step, staring into the distance, telling the anguish of a mistaken report the previous evening that his son might be alive. A reporter called and said Corey's name was on a hospital list.

"But he's not in any hospital," he said. "We checked."

A neighbor, who asked to not be named, clung to a rumor that authorities discovered a survivor. She remembered holding the infant Corey 17 years ago, when he arrived home from the hospital, and she remembered a conversation with him last month when he told her he wanted to join the Marines. He liked to fish and camp, she said, and he never caused problems in the neighborhood.



Depooter

"He would be home alone on weekends with his parents gone, and there were never any parties," she said. "He's a good kid, a wonderful kid."

Classmates described Depooter the same way, saying he put his schoolwork above all else. But he had numerous outside interests, they said, including in-line skating, golf and wrestling. He quit the wrestling team after his sophomore year to focus on his academics, said Bill Greaber, a junior. Landon Jones described him as a "stunt" Rollerblader. Tim Mullan, a junior, golfed with Depooter and said he flirted with par. Walking the fairways, they talked about girls and school.

"I don't think he liked all the classes," Mullan said. "But he liked the atmosphere."

At home on the golf course, Depooter worked with Landon on the Raccoon Creek maintenance crew, running the mower and raking bunkers.

"He's quiet," Jones said. "He would go out of his way to be nice."

Jones remembered conversations at the golf course in which they complained about the work. Then he corrected himself.

"Well, he didn't complain," Jones said. "He just laughed at the things I complained about."

Depooter fit in easily with various groups of students, his classmates said. Greaber remembered him as the first person to befriend him when he arrived from Arizona two years ago.

"He was the friendliest one."

Girls volleyball team captain loved animals, Shakespeare

By Bill Scanlon
News Staff Writer

She loved animals and volleyball and Shakespeare, and she had a good shot at being Columbine High School's valedictorian.

When Lauren Townsend died in Tuesday's massacre, the world lost a rare jewel, said friends and family.

Townsend

"I'll remember her as a beautiful soul," said Catherine Beck, sister-in-law of Lauren's stepfather, Bruce Beck. "And her beautiful smile. Her intelligence."

Lauren, 18, was captain of the girl's volleyball team at Columbine, where her mother, Dawn Anna, was the coach.

Lauren, a senior, worked at an animal shelter and recently received President Clinton's Award for Education Excellence.

Three weeks ago, she and her advanced-placement English teacher Carol Samson and other students went to England.

"She bought a gift for her stepfather," Samson recalled. "She worried all trip because they put the wrong name on it. Finally, she got on a special train back to Windsor, just to exchange the piece of glass."

Samson has a mental picture of Lauren in her classroom, holding a chick, asking how she could get a copy of *Othello*. The chick was a biology project.

"Lauren and the chick, standing at the door, I'll never forget that," said Samson.

Wednesday night, Lauren's stepuncle, David Beck, thanked well-wishers from across the country and read a statement: "We continue to pray that the families of Lauren's classmates, teachers and the entire Columbine community may be comforted by God's eternal love."

Lauren's family has set up a wildlife and scholarship Fund in her memory:

The Lauren Townsend
Memorial Fund

c/o EVEREN Securities, Inc.
165 So. Union Boulevard
Suite 900
Lakewood, CO 80228-2214.

TRAGEDY AT COLUMBINE

Teacher died for students

Dave Sanders alerted lunchroom and then warned others before being fatally wounded

By Bill Scanlon and Guy Kelly
News Staff Writers

Dave Sanders gave his all to the kids at Columbine High School.

On Tuesday, he gave his life.

Sanders, a longtime coach and teacher, put himself in the line of fire while shepherding at least 100 students to safety.

"Mr. Sanders was taking bullets for people," freshman Stephanie Lohrenz said. "He was a real hero."

Sanders

The assailants gunned down Sanders, but not before he alerted hundreds of students to the impending melee and directed many of them to safety.

He was courageous, cunning and compassionate, said teachers and students who witnessed his heroism.

They said the gunmen had chosen the perfect time and perfect spot for maximum carnage. About 10 minutes into the first lunch period, one of the gunmen walked toward the door of the cafeteria. Sanders was outside the lunchroom and could have run when he saw the arsenal.

Instead, he dashed through the cafeteria door.

"He ran into the cafeteria and warned everybody," English teacher Cheryl Lucas said. "We started moving because of him."

Sanders, Lucas, teachers Judy Kelly and Monette Park and two janitors hustled to get hundreds of students out of harm's way. By the time the first gunman was inside, the cafeteria was virtually empty. By just a few seconds, they had beaten the gunmen.

"All the teachers there have done heroic things," Lucas said. "But he was the most responsible for saving a bunch of lives."

Indeed, it wasn't until Sanders burst in and started shouting that people realized the banging and popping they were hearing was more than a senior prank.

"Otherwise that boy would have come in unchallenged," Lucas said. "He conceivably could have thrown a grenade or bomb at the kids eating lunches. They would have been sitting ducks if not for Mr. Sanders."

It was a moment Kelly said she'll never forget. "His face is etched on my mind at that moment that he took charge. Dave and two janitors, Jay and John, put their lives in jeopardy for these young people."

Lucas and Kelly herded about 30 students into a classroom and lost track of Sanders.

They heard an alarm but were afraid it was a ploy by the gunmen, so they waited. When they saw a signal from other teachers that a quick dash was safe, they ordered the kids to run.

But students and others said that instead of racing out, Sanders ran to warn others. He was shot and stumbled into a class where a handful of kids were hiding.

For more than three hours, students tried to stop bleeding from the wound to the chest.

"I heard him say, 'I'm not going to make it,'" Marjorie Lindholn said. "He was saying, 'Tell my girls I love them.'"

Sanders, who has two grown daughters, coached hundreds of girls. Among them is Amber Burgess, one of the state's top female athletes.

Burgess was at her grandmother's funeral during the shootings at Columbine, but she spent Wednesday talking to teachers and friends, hanging out at Clement Park near the school.

Again and again, she said, people talked about Sanders' heroism.

"People said he was just amazing, just running everywhere warning people and telling the kids where to go," Burgess said. "He had opportunities to leave, but he chose not to because he wanted to make sure everyone got out."

She gave much of the credit for her success to Sanders.

"He was an absolutely wonderful man," she said. "Gentle hearted, just awesome, a real hero."

Columbine coach and teacher Rick Bath has been one of Sanders' best friends for some 25 years. They coached basketball and softball together at Columbine for most of that time, competing against each other before then.

Bath said he wasn't surprised Sanders put the students' safety before his own.

"He was very caring, more concerned about kids than getting a victory," Bath said. "He was always looking at what they were going to gain from things, rather than what he could."

Bath spent hours Wednesday with Sanders' family.

"Everybody is trying to get through the first stage of this, and we're not even there yet," Bath said. "This is just starting. Columbine is a good place. It just wasn't a good place yesterday."

News staff writer Mark Wolf contributed to this report.

Sharing the grief at Civic Center Park

Deborah Harvey of Denver weeps during memorial services at Civic Center Park on Wednesday. The memorial was for victims of the Columbine High School shooting that happened Tuesday.

Glenn Asakawa
News Staff
Photographer

"He was a perfect son. He was just good."

John Tomlin
Father of slain student John Tomlin

'Perfect son' among school fatalities

Tomlin

By Berny Morson
News Staff Writer

John Tomlin, 16, liked his weightlifting class at Columbine High School and driving his four-wheel-drive Chevy truck.

The sophomore attended Foothills Bible Church and was a member of the Youth group at Riverside Baptist Church South in Parker.

Last year, he and his dad, also John, went to Juarez, Mexico, with Missions Ministries to build a house for poor people.

"He was a perfect son," the father said. "He was just good. You'd ask him to wash a car, and he'd wash both cars."

The 16-year-old was among the 13 people killed Tuesday by two gunmen who had attended Columbine.

"There's no sense to it," his father said, "no sense at all."

CHURCH SERVICES

Some of the healing services planned in the wake of the Columbine High School tragedy:

TODAY

6:30 p.m., St. John's Episcopal Church, 13151 W. 28th Ave., Applewood

7 p.m., Sheridan Outreach Center, 2751 W. Oxford, Unit 5, Sheridan

7 p.m., St. Martha's Episcopal Church, 4001 W. 76th, Westminster

7 p.m., Littleton United Methodist Church, 5894 S. Datura (Littleton Blvd at Datura)

7 p.m., University Park United Methodist Church, 2180 S. University Blvd.

7:30 p.m., Ecumenical (joint) service at St. Francis Cabrini Catholic Church, Pierce and Chatfield, Littleton

8:30 p.m., St. Stephens Lutheran Church, 10828 Huron, Northglenn

FRIDAY

7 p.m., St. Andrew United Methodist Church, 6325 S. University Blvd.

7 p.m., Good Shepherd Episcopal Church, 8545 E. Dry Creek Road, Englewood

SUNDAY

10 a.m. discussion, 11 a.m. service: Baha'i Center, 225 E. Bayaud Ave., Denver

6 p.m. St. Michael the Archangel Church, 19099 E. Floyd Ave, Aurora

TRAGEDY AT COLUMBINE

Victim, 15, 'was a very lovable kid'

By Tustin Amole
News Staff Writer

Dan Mauser didn't mind showing affection.

"He was a very lovable kid," said his father, Tom Mauser. "He got along well with his sister; they loved each other a lot. He wasn't a kid who was shy about hugging his mom."

Mauser

Dan, a 15-year-old sophomore at Columbine High School, was one of 12 students who were killed in a shooting Tuesday. Fair-haired and bespectacled, the boy looks out from his yearbook picture, his smiling face full of promise.

"His last two report cards, he got straight A's," Mauser said. "He was not a jock."

Dan liked to play video games and was interested in current events. He was on the debate team and the cross-country squad, Mauser said.

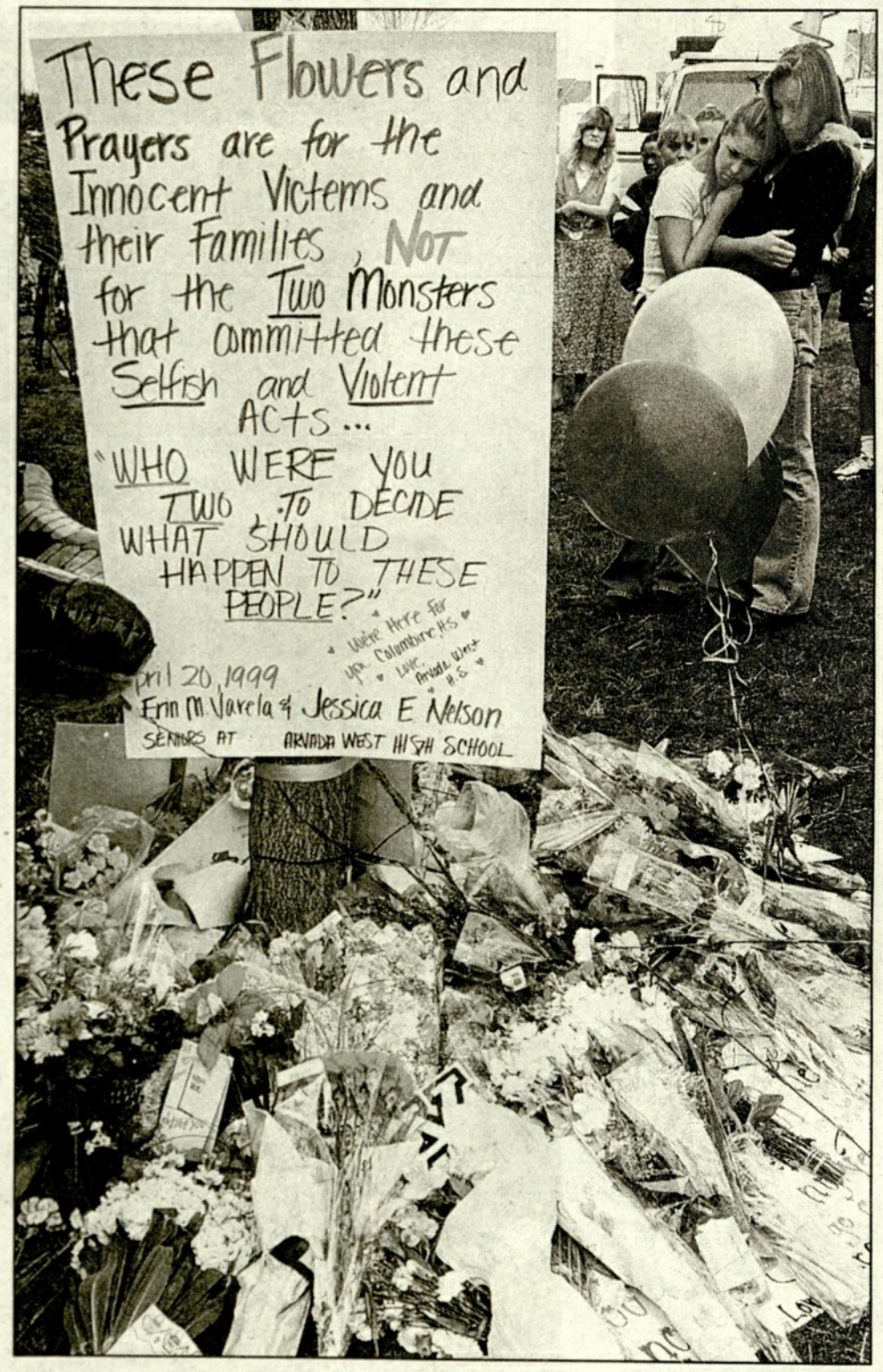
"He was just a delightful young man," said neighbor Ken Greenlaw. "It's hard to describe a young kid who was so tragically taken from us."

He grew up in the affluent tree-lined neighborhood and often could be seen playing soccer with other kids on the block.

And he was always there to help.

"I had a heart attack a few years ago, and he used to come down and help me," Greenlaw said. "He used to come and rake the leaves because he knew I couldn't do it.

"We will all miss him in the neighborhood."



A tribute from Arvada High

Flowers and a poster from Erin Varela and Jessida Nelson, seniors at Arvada West High School, pay tribute to the victims of Tuesday's rampage at Columbine High School. It was one of many makeshift memorials that appeared in Clement Park, which is next to Columbine, on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Ken Papaleo
News Staff
Photographer

For friends, long wait is painfully tense

By Carla Crowder
News Staff Writer

One of Cassie Bernall's friends spoke of her in present tense Wednesday. Another spoke of her in past tense.

Such was the waiting game outside Columbine High School as friends and families of missing students refused to give up hope that someone might have survived the carnage.

"Cassie is a light for Christ, a great girl," said Craig Moon, 17, wandering through Clement Park near the site of the massacre.

"Cassie was a ray of sunlight," Justin Boggus said moments later. "She was the kind of girl who was always happy, no matter what. She loved everybody. She loved God. She loved the world."

Bernall

Bernall, a junior at Columbine High School, still was missing Wednesday. Boggus feared that she was dead, but authorities still had not confirmed the names of those who were slain.

Boggus and Moon are active in the youth group at West Bowles Community Church. That is where they got to know Bernall.

They said she often studied in the school library — it was the site of the worst violence — during her lunch hour.

"She was a good writer. She loved poetry," Boggus said.

During tense hours Tuesday afternoon, the youth group kept a running computer list of its members as they safely escaped from the school.

"The last two kids unaccounted for were me and Cassie, because I was holed up," Moon said. "I got out, and it looks like she didn't."

Soon after Moon escaped, he met up with Bernall's mother outside nearby Leawood Elementary School, where hundreds of parents were being united with traumatized teens.

"Her mom came up to me every two minutes and asked if I'd seen Cassie. I told her, 'I'm sure there are a lot of people unaccounted for,' " Moon said.

But that mother's daughter never showed up Tuesday.

"I'm good friends with her brother, and I saw him last night and I just bawled my eyes out," said Boggus, a student at Bear Creek High School.

Moon, like a lot of other grieving students, relies on his faith in God to support him.

When the shooting started, "The first thing I did, I ran to a girl and I just started praying. They can take my life, but they can't take my God away."

Slain student's car becomes a shrine

By Steve Caulk
News Staff Writer

Young people leaned across the hood of a red Acura Legend at Clement Park Wednesday, painfully aware they would never again see Rachel Scott at the wheel.

A budding playwright, thespian, public speaker and musician, Scott touched the lives of everyone at Columbine High School who followed the arts, and now they longed to touch her back. They expressed their grief by turning her automobile into a shrine.

Flowers covered the car, left where the 17-year-old Scott parked it before she went to school. By Wednesday afternoon balloons and a white teddy bear appeared.

Still incredulous that their friend could have been a victim of Tuesday's shooting rampage, people hugged the fendors, kissed the windows and huddled around the vehicle. At one point, in a spirited effort to console themselves, they began to chant, "We are ... COLUMBINE! We are ... COLUMBINE!"

But when the chanting stopped, a voice sobbed, "Why did this have to happen to us?"

Scott

Sarah Arzola, stood to the side, unable to face the truth and unable to tear herself away. She displayed half a necklace charm reading, "Best Friends for Life."

"Rachel has the other one," she said. "We were complete opposites, but we were best friends."

She and others at Clement Park Wednesday described Scott as ambitious, goal-oriented and driven by her dreams. She appeared last month in a school production of a play called *Smoke in the Room*, and the performance prompted freshman Tammy Gordon to introduce herself.

"I just had to tell her how good she was," Gordon said, adding that Scott made her laugh and made her cry.

Scott's love of theater inspired her to write her own play, Arzola said.

"It's about a guy in the '20s who takes everything for granted and then loses it all," she said. "He's a piano player who makes up his own music. He can't read music, so he just does it from his head. That's what Rachel used to do. She couldn't read music, but she played really well, and she wrote music in her head."

Scott also produced videos, said her friends, and she dreamed of becoming a movie producer. She and Arzola created a video that chronicled last year's homecoming activities. None of her videos ever had a violent theme, said Chris Reilly, a junior in her video production class.

"She was the nicest person I ever met," he said, "a very big Christian. She was friendly with everybody, even the gangsters. It seemed that she was really nice to them. I was shocked when I heard they shot her, because she was so nice to them."

Sue Arzola, Sarah's mother, said she was thankful for her daughter's friendship with Scott because Scott was such a good influence.

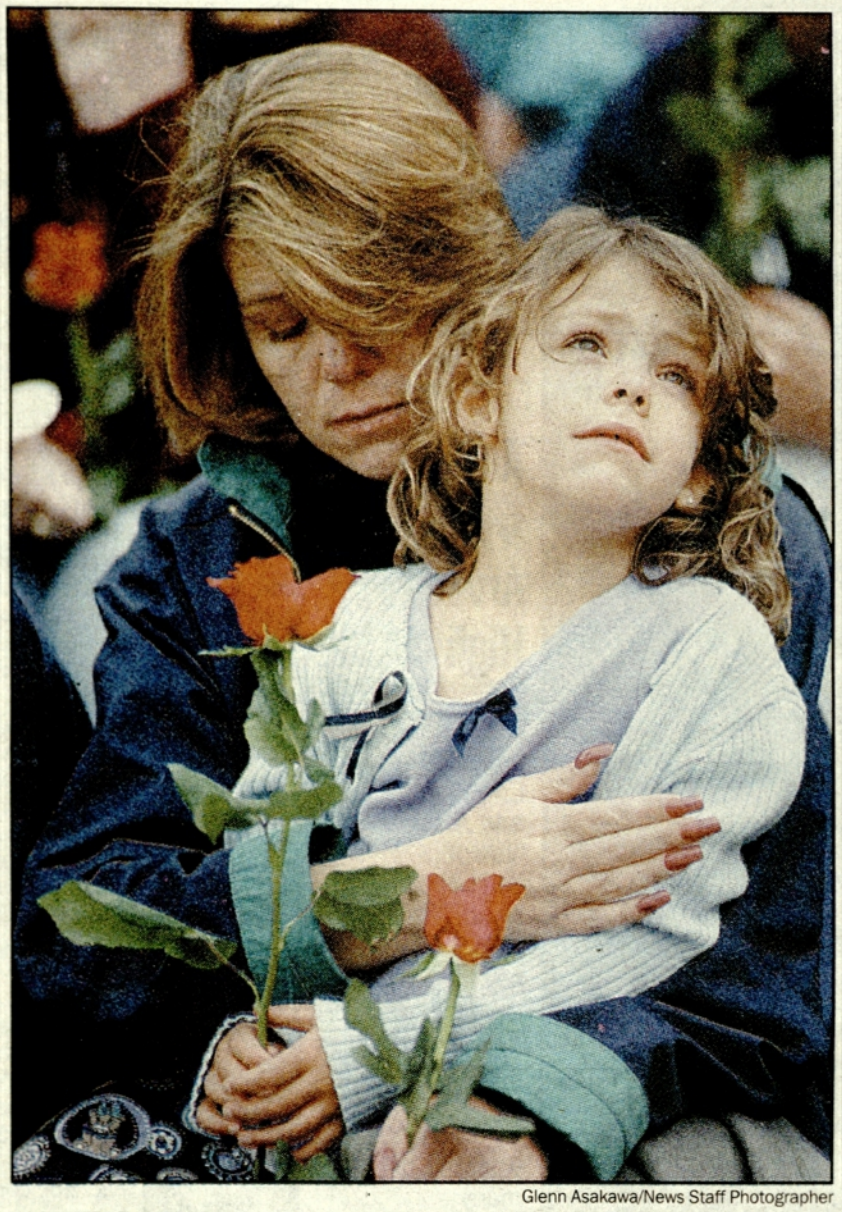
"She and Sarah talked about becoming youth ministers, and how they were going to write poetry," she said.

Scott, who has two brothers and two sisters, was a member of the Orchard Road Christian Center, said her cousin, Sarah Scott. The cousin honored her with a poem of her own:

"Slipping away from the world today, Angel of mine, you found your way."

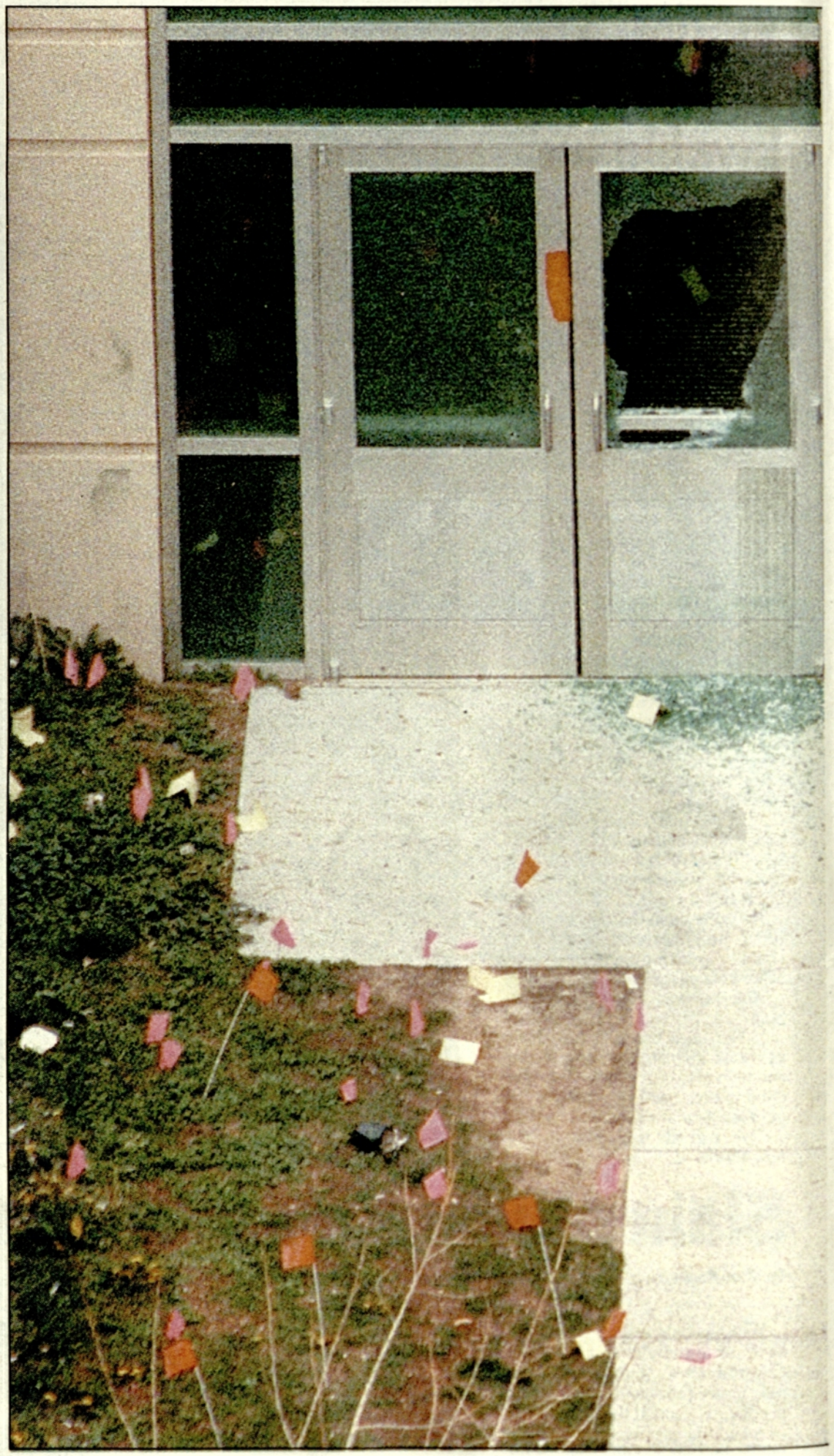
News staff writer Kevin Vaughan and Bill Scanlon contributed to this report.

TRAGEDY AT COLUMBINE



Glenn Asakawa/News Staff Photographer

Joni Webb of Littleton hugs her daughter Jackie, 5, Wednesday during a vigil at Civic Center Park in memory of the Columbine High School shooting victims.



Seeking SOLACE

A shared grief pulls people into churches and Clement Park

By Carla Crowder and Deborah Frazier
News Staff Writers

Thousands of mourners streamed into Littleton Wednesday, bearing flowers and faith. The grim hordes pressed against police lines, snarled traffic, crumpled in tears and just stared into the white sky looking for answers.

Many found them in church. Memorial services throughout the metro area rang with words of hope and comfort.

"Trust God, even though you can't understand him and you feel your world has caved in around you," said pastor Bill Oudemolen at Foothills Bible Church, where Gov. Bill Owens and former Gov. Roy Romer attended a Wednesday evening service.

At a community vigil at Greek Amphitheater, Mayor Wellington Webb asked people to do three things:

"When you go home tonight, say a prayer for the families from Columbine High School and hug your own children. No. 2, I want you to hug someone else's children, because some of our children may not get the love that they want, and lastly, hug someone who doesn't look like you."

All day, shell-shocked Columbine High School students returned to the scene of the massacre — at least as close as they could get — in droves.

With hundreds of police investigators sifting through the wreckage and searching out bombs on school grounds, nearby Clement Park became a mourners' mecca.

Proud Columbine seniors sported their '99 class sweatshirts. "We were the first freshman class. We opened the school," said senior Autumn Hettinger. Seventeen days remain in the school year.

"We don't want to go back. We want them to tear it down and start over," Hettinger said.

Teens, parents and well-wishers shuffled along sidewalks. They brought flowers, candles and posters, placing them at makeshift memorials that sprang up among a sea of satellite trucks and cameras.

Media from all over the nation, and the world, descended.

"Try Denmark, Japan, Germany, France," said George Straw, a reserve deputy for the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department. He was called at about sunrise to direct traffic at a Clement Park entrance.

From his vantage point, Straw watched face after tear-streaked face pass by. "It's like looking at an airplane wreck. There's nothing you can do," he said.

The park looked like a carnival of grief. Food was being served, and there were portable toilets aplenty. But everyone talked about death, even the tots who normally play on swing sets there. A little boy told his mother, "They could come to my school and shoot us."

"No, no," his mom assured him.

TRAGEDY AT COLUMBINE

Dennis Schroeder/News Staff Photographer

Left: Investigators tackle the intricate task of marking crime scene evidence Wednesday at the doorway where gunmen entered Columbine High School on their violent rampage Tuesday.

Glenn Asakawa/News Staff Photographer

Hands protect candle flames from the wind during Wednesday's community vigil at Civic Center Park.

Leawood Elementary School, several blocks away, was opened for grieving families awaiting final word about missing students. About five families huddled in the gym, a police chaplain said.

They weren't yet convinced that their children were victims. They clung to glimmers of hope. Maybe there was a mixup, maybe their kid was spending the night with someone else. Maybe their kid was hiding in a school crawl space, still awaiting rescue.

Elsewhere in the neighborhood, students from other Jefferson County schools turned out to support grieving friends and strangers.

"I'm just so glad I don't go to school here. I pray for those who do," said Antoine Rodriguez, 18, who graduated last year from Arvada High School.

A giant of a man, Rodriguez carried a bright bouquet and a teddy bear. When a teary-eyed grief counselor approached him, it was he who pulled a tissue from his jacket and offered it to her.

Girls from Chatfield High handed out white ribbons. "We want to show our peace," one said.

Amy Erickson, who lives near the school, came to the park with her four young children to leave a lily and letters for the victims.

She heard on the news advice to not discuss these events with kids, but has done so anyway. "I don't know that I can hide it from them. It happened to people that they know. We can't even get to McDonald's right now without taking the long way around," she said.

Erickson said she was overcome with despair Tuesday. Trying to cope, she helped other mothers find their kids in the madness after the killings.

"You feel relieved when someone was found. Our babysitters were found. Then you feel guilty knowing there is a parent standing at Leawood (Elementary School) and her kid is never going to come home again."

Her son, Ben Erickson, 7, carried a letter: "I am so sorry that this is happen to you guys and I will pray for you. I will send you a lot of angels to you guys and girls."

"People all want to help out," Straw said. "One guy just came out here in the most beat-up truck in the world. It wasn't worth $250 and he had 3,000 fresh doughnuts he wanted to donate."

Two miles down Bowles Avenue, the Light of the World Catholic Church became a haven for mourners.

A larger-than-life wooden crucifix was propped on its side, arm pointing skyward, left over from Easter. Butterfly balloons flapped in the breeze, and a billboard-size card was there to collect signatures.

"Perhaps today, we value life more than we did yesterday," said youth minister Barbara Lotze, who'd watched many of the kids grow up.

Inside the church, 16 candles flickered, one for each of the dead, including the two suspects. A bagpiper in a kilt played *Amazing Grace.*

As evening drizzle came, mourners built tents to protect the memorials, which grew to 20 feet long by day's end.

The tents weren't big enough to shield a giant banner from the rain. All day, passersby signed the huge banner. "We love Columbine kids and parents," it read.

Night brought cold to the park, and still more mourners, weeping in the damp darkness.

An evening memorial at nearby Foothills Bible Church overflowed with loved ones of the students and teachers killed, maimed and emotionally scarred by the incident.

"It is in my prayers that God can turn this evil to good," said Oudemolen, the pastor.

About 40 Columbine students and teachers embraced and wept at the front of the church.

One student after another praised teacher and coach Dave Sanders, who saved their lives and lost his own.

At the end of the service, Oudemolen asked survivors to form lines in the aisle and accept the embraces and prayers of those gathered.

"When you pray for us tonight, also pray that this will never happen again," student Courtney Reynolds said.

Reporters Sue Lindsay, Kevin Vaughan, Tillie Fong and Lou Kilzer contributed to this report.

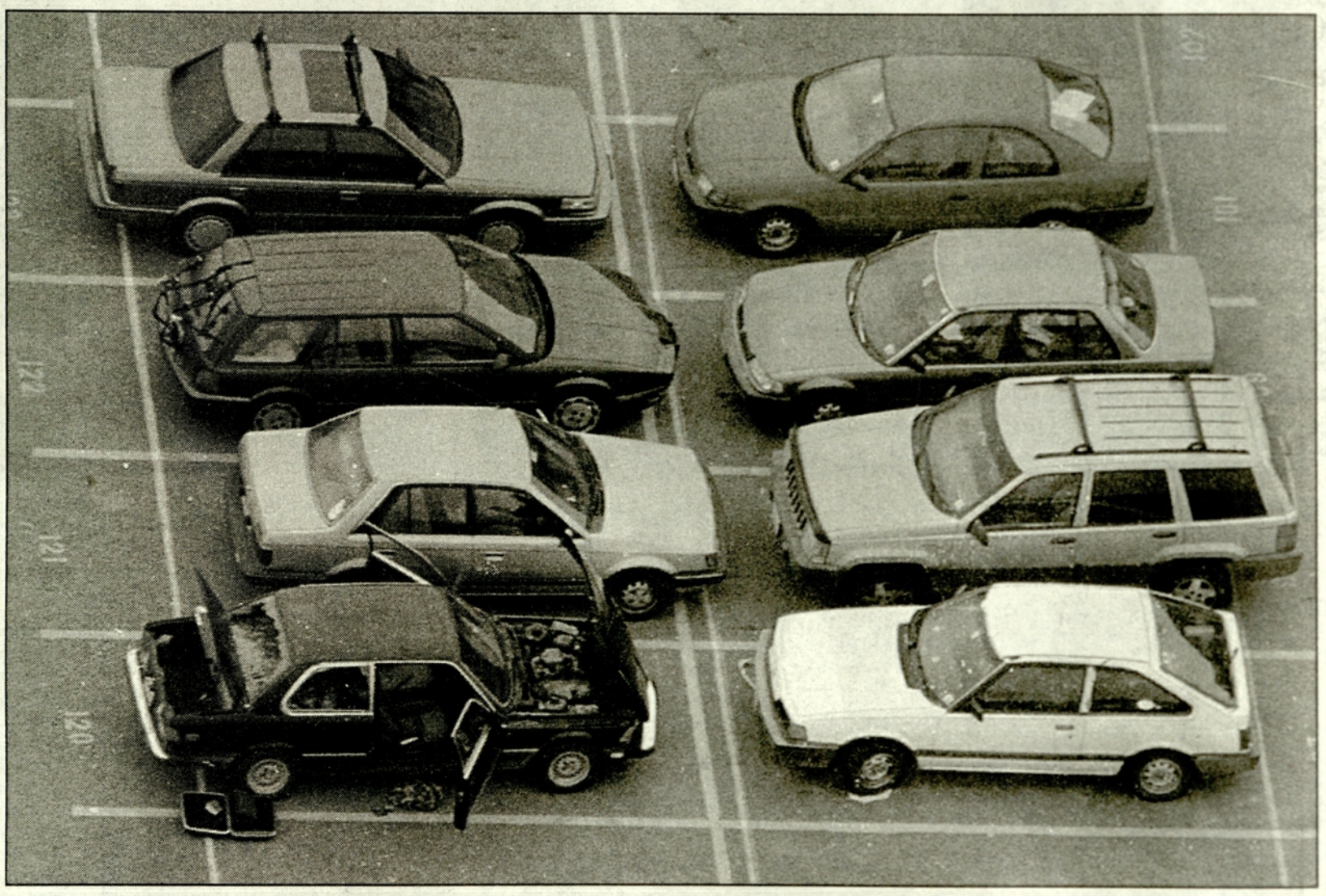
TRAGEDY AT COLUMBINE

"I live in Denver, and I would love to kill almost all of its residents. You all better hide in your houses because I'm coming for everyone and I will shoot to kill and I will kill everything." — message on Internet attributed to Eric Harris

Friendly faces hid kid killers

Social, normal teens eventually harbored dark, sinister attitudes

By Lynn Bartels and Ann Imse
News Staff Writers



Dennis Schroeder/News Staff Photographer

Aerial view of the Columbine High School parking lot on Wednesday shows a dark BMW sedan, bottom left, believed to belong to shooting suspect Dylan Klebold. Police searched the car for bombs, booby traps and evidence.

How do bright young boys turn into evil young men?

That question has haunted a community, a state and a nation since Tuesday, when Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold shot their way through Columbine High School.

By all accounts, Harris and Klebold were good boys.

Harris played Little League in upstate New York, where the Air Force had sent his father.

"Eric had three best friends," classmate Nora Boreaux of Plattsburgh, N.Y., recalled. "One was black, one was white and one was Asian."

Klebold joined the Boy Scouts in Jefferson County, where his family has lived for years.

"He had good parents and he had a good family," classmate Nick Baumgart said.

Harris, 18, and Klebold, 17, became tight sometime after the Harrises moved to Littleton in 1996. Gradually, the teens' interests changed from Boy Scouts and baseball to firearms and facism.

At Columbine, Harris and Klebold became early members of the Trench Coat Mafia, a clique of outcasts known for their Old West long coats.

Junior Chris Reilly said when he heard that the two gunmen wore black trench coats, he had five students in mind.

"Eric and Dylan were two of them," he said.

Dozens of friends and neighbors described the two as normal teens who kept largely to themselves but were sociable. That description contrasted sharply with those from fellow students and teachers of a pair of youths depressed, angry and admiring of the Nazis.

It contrasted even more vividly with the picture painted by investigators: two students vicious enough to laugh during mass-murder and organized enough to build and plant dozens of explosives.

After their bloody rampage, investigators found 15 bodies: 12 innocent students, a popular teacher and coach and the two gunmen, who killed themselves after committing the worst act of school violence in U.S. history.

Were the warning signs there?

You bet, said one Columbine parent, who called the Jefferson County sheriff last year to report Harris had threatened his son.

The parent, who asked not to be identified, said he found Harris' writings on the Internet so frightening that he turned over 15 pages to a deputy.

Harris wrote that he couldn't wait to start killing people and that he would feel no remorse, according to documents obtained by Brian Maass for News4.

"I live in Denver, and I would love to kill almost all of its residents," Harris wrote. "You all better hide in your houses because I'm coming for everyone and I will shoot to kill and I will kill everything."

But others didn't notice anything wrong.

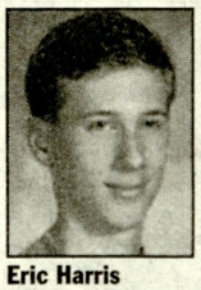
"They were normal high school kids, had the normal high school camaraderie," said Chris Lau, their boss at Blackjack Pizza near the school.

Harris also had worked at a fireworks stand and asked to be paid in fireworks, his friends said.

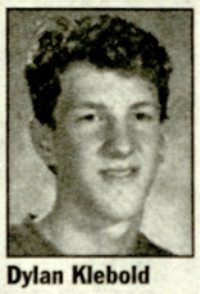
Harris lived with his parents, Wayne and Kathy Harris, in an area of mushrooming subdivisions south of the school on South Reed Street. Wayne Harris was retired from the Air Force. An elder son, Kevin Harris, 20, graduated from Columbine and staff members remembered him as a popular athlete.

Klebold lived with his parents, Tom and Sue, in an expensive home nestled between a pair of red rock formations in Deer Creek Canyon, west of Chatfield Reservoir.

On Wednesday, a sign hung on the gate: "Sue and Tom, we love you. Call us." Nineteen people had penned in their first names.



Eric Harris



Dylan Klebold

Klebold's mother worked with disabled students in the community college system.

Former co-worker Sharon Wink at Arapahoe Community College described her as "very empathetic" and a great listener.

"I can't imagine her not being a good parent," Wink said.

The Klebolds own eight cars, including five 1980s-vintage BMWs. The one Dylan Klebold drove was always over at Eric Harris' house.

Baumgart and other friends said Klebold started to change after he met Harris.

The teen-agers linked their home computers and for hours played violent video games.

The pair got in trouble a year ago ago when they attempted to break into a car to steal, but they had successfully completed a diversion program, Jefferson County District Attorney Dave Thomas said.

In addition, Columbine suspended one of the students last year for hacking into a school computer, a staff member said. The school district won't release details.

The Trench Coat Mafia was no secret at Columbine and even took out a lighthearted ad in the yearbook last year during happier times.

Some members graduated. Others dropped out of the clique.

The Trench Coat Mafia that roamed the halls this year seemed a darker, unhappier group.

"You'd see them marching down the hall," junior Michael Staver said. "They had berets on. They'd march in sharp turns. They looked like their own little army."

But senior Autumn Hettinger said she never thought Harris or Klebold odd.

"They were good students. They were smart. Teachers went to them with computer problems," she said.

Police now believe Klebold and Harris had planned their Armageddon for sometime.

Harris' neighbor, Matt Good, 16, said he heard pounding in the garage during the weekend.

Another neighbor, Bill Konen, said he heard Harris and Klebold talking Monday morning.

"One said, 'I need a metal baseball bat,' " he recalled.

He then heard the sound of breaking glass through the open garage. "I assumed it was some weird art project."

Police told him they were probably making shrapnel for their bombs.

Senior Jessica Rosecrans said she went to a bowling class with Harris hours before the shootings.

He showed up for their 6:15 a.m. class wearing regular clothes and "not acting strange."

Hettinger again saw Harris about five minutes before the blood bath began. She was in her car in the school parking lot and he walked in front of her.

"He was in this trench coat and he had all this stuff around his waist," she said. "I just kept thinking that can't be a backpack. That can't be a fannypack. That's too big."

TRAGEDY AT COLUMBINE

Video a blueprint for shootings

Film made for class shows 2 firing weapons while walking in halls at Columbine, student says

By Sue Lindsay and Bill Scanlon
News Staff Writers

A video Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold made for a class last fall was a blueprint for Tuesday's massacre at Columbine High School.

The video showed the two teen-agers firing weapons as they walked down the hallways of the high school, junior Chris Reilly said. "I saw the video Eric and Dylan made," Reilly said. "It represented what happened."

Harris and Klebold killed and wounded dozens of students before they killed themselves Tuesday.

In the film, "they had their friends pretend to be the jocks, and they pretended to be the gunmen shooting them. It was disturbing to everyone who saw it," Reilly said.

"They were a little upset they couldn't show their video to the whole school," he said. "But there were guns in every scene of the video, so you can't show that."

Jefferson County schools spokeswoman Kay Pride said the district had no comment on the video.

"We will in good time determine whether the film was made and then we may have some comment on it," she said.

Garrett Talocco, who taught the class, refused to comment.

Klebold and Harris starred in several of their own movies for the class, said Eric Veik, 16, who helped produce the films.

"They always were the same kind of videos," Veik said. "They always wore trench coats. They always wanted to be the intimidators, the good guys out to get the bad guys."

Veik said he turned over copies of "three or four" videos to police after the shooting Tuesday.

Reilly and Veik both said they immediately thought of Harris and Klebold when they heard about the shooting.

They were "constantly insulted and harassed" by other students, Veik said.

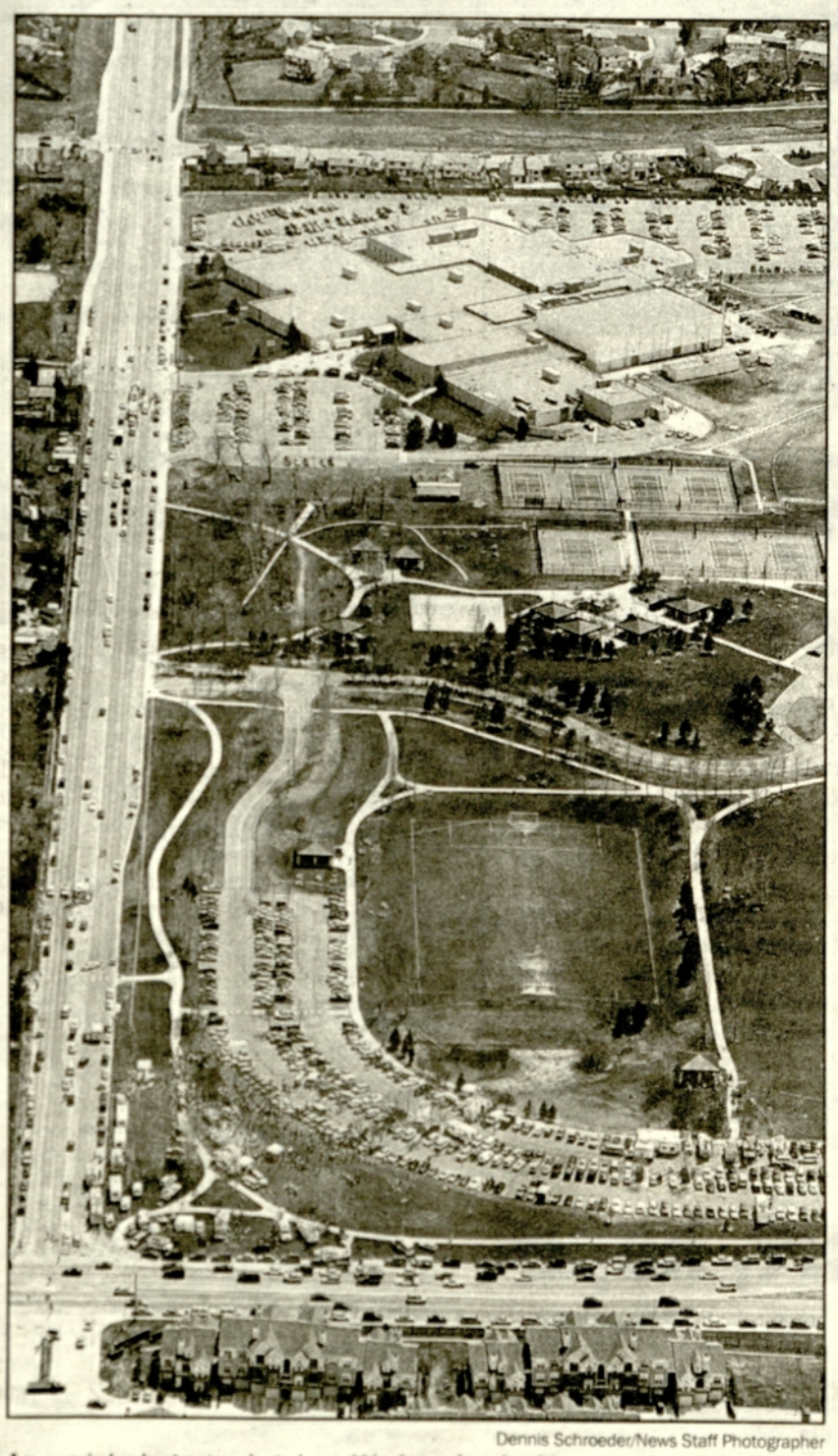
"I guess yesterday they finally decided not to take any more crap and to get back at people."

The two were capable of executing a complex plan, Veik said.

"It's conceivable they could have planned something like this," he said.

"I don't know if anyone could have prevented this, once they had their minds set on it."

Overview of tragedy, vigil



Dennis Schroeder/News Staff Photographer

An aerial photograph taken Wednesday looking south down Pierce Street shows Columbine High School at the top of the photo. At the bottom of the photo is Clement Park, with a semicircle of mourners' cars in the parking lot. Bowles Avenue runs from left to right at the lower edge of the photograph. The high school remained closed after two students went on a shooting rampage Tuesday that has been described as the deadliest series of shootings at a school in U.S. history. Some bodies still remained in the school earlier Wednesday.

Columbine may remain closed for school year

Extensive cleaning and repairs needed before classes resume

By Berny Morson
News Staff Writer

Columbine High School will not reopen this week — and maybe not this semester, school officials said Wednesday.

The site of the nation's worst school massacre will require extensive cleanup before students can return, school board president Jon DeStefano said.

In addition to bullet holes and bomb damage, sprinklers were activated during the four-hour standoff, leaving ankle-deep water in parts of the building, police officers said.

"We want to be sure when we send our people and our children into the school it has no sign of what happened," DeStefano said.

School officials have not been allowed inside the building while the investigation continues.

"They're telling us it's pretty gruesome and pretty damaged inside," school district spokesman Rick Kaufman said.

If Columbine cannot be reopened, arrangements will have to be made for students to complete courses and take tests so they can graduate or advance to the next grade, Kaufman said.

Students who gathered near the school Wednesday said re-entering Columbine won't be easy.

"As you walk down the hall, you'll think about what was there," said Stephen Trujillo, 18, a senior.

Dustin Harrison, a senior, said: "I had five to seven friends killed in that library. I'm not going back there."

If Columbine remains closed for the rest of the year, the prolonged closure would be unique among schools that have had mass killings by students. From Pearl, Miss., to Springfield, Ore., schools reopened within one or two school days after fatal shootings.

"We were shut down one day to clean up, and we opened the next day," said Dick Young, superintendent of Westside Middle School in Jonesboro, Ark., where an 11-year-old and 13-year-old killed four students and a teacher and wounded 10 other students March 24, 1998.

At Pearl High School in Pearl, Miss., a student killed his former girlfriend and her best friend in 1997. The school was closed Thursday and the girls' funerals were on Friday. School resumed the following Monday.

"We tried to get back on track as quickly as possible. We wanted to give a reasonable amount of time for the grieving process, but getting back on track as much as possible is part of the healing process," Principal Roy Balentine said.

In West Paducah, Ky., and Springfield, Ore., school officials said they reopened after one day.

Staff writers Dick Foster and Manny Gonzales contributed to this report.

Today, all but Columbine open

By Berny Morson and Manny Gonzales
News Staff Writers

All Jefferson County schools, except Columbine High School, will reopen today.

Middle and high school students will have increased security, including greater awareness of outsiders on campus, district spokesman Rick Kaufman said. He said each of the 142 district schools will have been checked for bombs by this morning.

Counselors will be available to work with students, he said.

Still under discussion is whether to cancel remaining proms, Kaufman said. Columbine's prom was last weekend.

Classes also are expected to resume across the metro area today, after many were canceled Wednesday.

Jefferson County Schools closed all its schools Wednesday, while Denver Public Schools closed its high schools, one junior high and an elementary school.

"The police recommended it, and we followed their lead," Denver Public Schools spokesman Mark Stevens said.

While students were in class, their minds and hearts were on Columbine. Many Littleton High School students spent the day gathering flowers and making signs and cards to show their support.

After school Wednesday, more than 100 Littleton High students marched into Clement Park, adjacent to Columbine, where a throng of young survivors and media had gathered. Those who gathered carried flowers and banners.

"You forget you're rivals and imagine what it would be like if it was your school and your friends," Littleton High senior Ginny Wilkes said.

TRAGEDY AT COLUMBINE

"It's so amazing. People have called from all over the country."
— **Brian Vogt,** president, South Metro Denver Chamber of Commerce

Linda McConnell/News Staff Photographer

A woman adds flowers to a cross at Light of the World Catholic church that became an impromptu memorial area Wednesday.

Offers of help pour in

People donate blood, trees, food, flowers, even caskets

By Rebecca Jones and Marlys Duran
News Staff Writers

From cookies to caskets, Colorado and the world have found ways to serve Columbine High students and families.

Phone calls and e-mail messages are coming from such places as California, Maryland, Canada and England.

The Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce began fielding calls Wednesday morning from airlines offering free flights for victims' families, restaurants and grocery stores offering food, and people wanting to donate money and blood.

Thousands who gave blood at Bonfils Blood Center and who attended a Catholic service Tuesday night received Girl Scouts cookies from girls who wanted to help. The Mile Hi Council has compiled grief resources to help troop leaders and parents talk to girls about the tragedy. Those resources are available on www.girlscoutsmilehi.org.

The Santa Barbara (Calif.) Flower Growers Association will ship thousands of free roses, lilies, daisies and other blooms to 12 Littleton-area floral shops.

Iowa Gov. Tom Vilsack and first lady Christie Vilsack will send trees to Littleton.

"It's so amazing. People have called from all over the country," said Brian Vogt, president of the Littleton-based South Metro Denver Chamber of Commerce.

Horan & McConaty, a Lakewood funeral service, has offered free services, including caskets, a bagpiper, personalized video memorials and burial plots for the victims.

"We understand that the experience of death under circumstances such as these requires a different and very special approach on our part as funeral directors," owner John Horan said. "We stand ready to serve in any way necessary."

Olinger Mortuaries has made the same offer. And Chapel Hill Memorial Gardens in Littleton has offered to create a memorial garden at the cemetery to commemorate victims.

The Colorado Humane Society and American Humane Association have offered to care for the pets of the victims' families. Pets will be sheltered at My Pet's Place, 9111 S. Santa Fe Drive, Littleton, (303) 683-0330; and at Animal Hospital Center, 5640 E. County Line Road, Highlands Ranch, (303) 781-9595.

Pope sends message of comfort, hope

By Jean Torkelson
News Religion Writer

As World Youth Day's most revered visitor six years ago, Pope John Paul II said Denver made him feel younger.

This week, he said the city has sent him into deep shock.

The pope sent a message Wednesday to Denver Archbishop Charles J. Chaput expressing his sorrow at the carnage at Columbine High School and assuring Coloradans "of his prayerful closeness at this very difficult time."

The pope added that he hoped "American society as a whole will react to this latest act of violence among the young by committing itself to promoting and transmitting the moral vision and the values which alone can ensure respect for the inviolable dignity of human life."

Chaput spent part of the day meeting with the families of two dead teens.

"It was amazing," he said. "Both families exhibited extraordinary strength and a certain acceptance of this — I don't have any idea how they did it, but it touched me very deeply."

The archbishop is spiritual leader of 325,000 Catholics in northern Colorado, including several hundred families with children enrolled at Columbine High School in Jefferson County.

"It's obvious to me that the violence we experience in our very sophisticated and comfortble society is the result of the coarsening of the value of human life," Chaput said.

"Whether it's abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty — we see violence as a solution, and our attitude about these issues carries over to young people. When they're angry or hostile, they may strike out."

Chaput added that he felt a special sorrow for the parents of the killers: "In some ways their burden is the worst burden because they not only carry the loss of their own children, even though it was self-inflicted, but the loss of all the other children."

HOW TO HELP

Here are some other ways to assist the victims of Tuesday's tragedy:

Places to donate money

■ United Way's Healing Fund supports victims and families as well as local violence prevention programs. More than $100,000 has been contributed since Wednesday. Contributions: The Healing Fund, P.O. Box 46531, Denver, CO 80201. All branches of Colorado's five largest banks — Colorado BankOne, First Bank, KeyBank, Norwest Bank and U.S. Bank — will accept donations.

■ The Longmont High School Student Senate has challenged all high schools to donate at least $1 per student to the "Colorado Schools for Columbine" campaign, a part of United Way's Healing Fund. Contributions: "Colorado Schools for Columbine Healing Fund," Mile High United Way, 2505 18th St., Denver, CO 80211.

■ Safeway made a $10,000 contribution to a victims' assistance fund, and additional donations will be accepted at all Safeways in Colorado, Wyoming, South Dakota, Nebraska and New Mexico.

■ Radio station Alice 106 has established a fund through First Bank. Donations: all First Bank locations and at 1200 17th St., Suite 2300, Denver, CO 80202.

■ The Colorado High School Activities Association has set up a Columbine High School Assistance Fund. A portion of the revenues from regional and state baseball tournaments will be donated. Contributions: CHSAA, 14855 E. Second Ave., Aurora, CO 80011.

■ The South Metro Chamber of Commerce has created the Columbine Support Fund. Contributions: Colorado Business Bank, 101 W. Mineral Ave., Littleton, CO 80120.

■ On Saturday, the Center for Holistic Health, 3102 S. Parker Road, Aurora, will donate all money received for massages, energy work, nutrition, tarot card readings and body treatments to the First Bank fund.

■ The Salvation Army is feeding hundreds of relief workers and providing counseling. Donations: The Salvation Army, P.O. Box 2369, Denver, CO 80201, Attention: Metro Denver EDS.

Commit to donating blood — in a few weeks

Blood bank officials say they were overwhelmed by community response in the aftermath of the shootings.

"We're encouraging people to schedule an appointment to give blood to replenish our supply over several weeks," says Christy Honigman, spokeswoman for Transfusion Medicine Services.

Offer your counseling services

Colorado Mental Health Services — (303) 866-7400 — seeks qualified therapists. Counselors who have been certified with Mayflower or Oklahoma City Bombing Training for Crisis Counseling are preferred.

IF YOU NEED HELP

■ Mental health counselors from the American Red Cross will staff a grief counseling hot line 24 hours a day, at least through the weekend. Call (303) 722-7474.

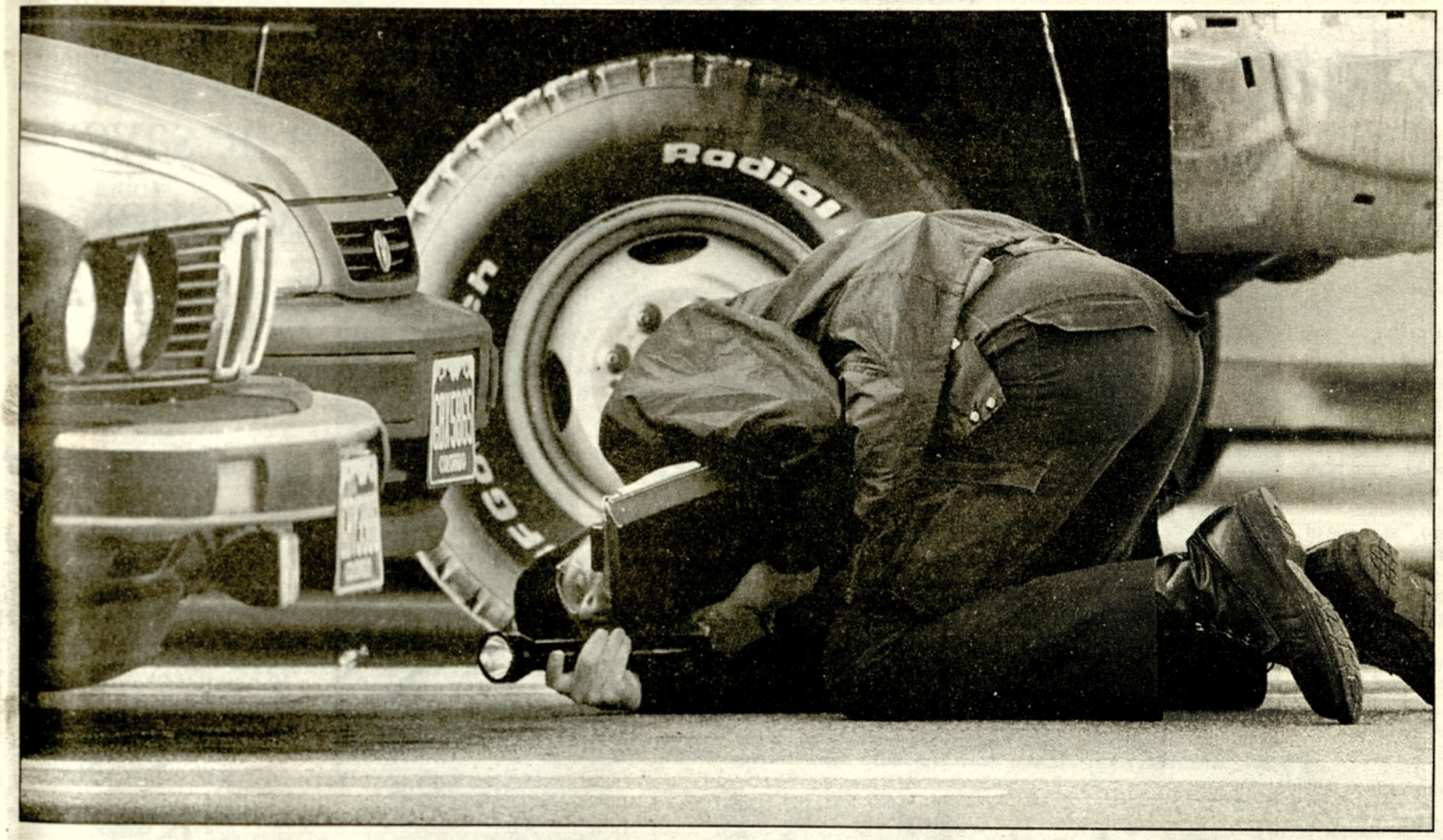
■ Professional counselors from the Jefferson Center for Mental Health will offer free services today at Light of the World Catholic Church, 10306 W. Bowles Ave., from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. and many other locations. The center also staffs a 24-hour emergency hotline: (303) 425-0300.

■ Drop-in counseling will be available 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. today at The Ascot Event Center, 9136 W. Bowles Ave., and at Fort Logan Mental Health Center, 3520 W. Oxford Ave.

■ The Jefferson County Department of Health and Environment will start a weekly drop-in support group beginning today, 6 to 8 p.m., in the auditorium of the Health Department's Lakewood site, 260 S. Kipling St., and will meet every Thursday for the next two to three months. Information: (303) 239-7162.

■ The Colorado Hospice Organization is prepared to send counselors into schools or to meet with groups. Information: (303) 449-1142.

TRAGEDY AT COLUMBINE



A Colorado Bureau of Investigation agent checks cars for explosives in the parking lot outside Columbine High School on Wednesday. Worried about bombs and booby traps, officers with special training checked thousands of lockers and backpacks inside the school in addition to the cars outside.

Michael S. Green
Associated Press

District was warned of increased violence

Sheriff's conclusions about situation are still exaggerations, school officials say

By Brian Weber
News Education Writer

The Jefferson County Sheriff's Department six months ago warned school officials about more violence among young people in the southern part of the county, where Columbine High School is.

At the time, the district disputed the department's characterizations of its high school students. They said they were exaggerations based on two fights and the confiscation of an assault weapon that belonged to the parent of a former student.

They still are exaggerations, officials said Wednesday.

"We're saying we think that our response here shows we are addressing the issue the best way we can, and perhaps the situation (last fall) was exaggerated," said Kay Pride, a school district spokeswoman.

Jefferson County Commissioner Pat Holloway saw it differently after Tuesday's murderous rampage. "I thought about that report and I thought: They were right," she said. "I thought they (school officials) said there weren't any problems. Then all of a sudden we've got this."

Holloway wants the county and the district to look into more prevention tactics.

Last fall, the department found that fights had increased among groups of youths similar to gangs usually associated with the inner city. There was a faction called The Jocks, made up largely of high school athletes, Capt. Richard Boyd said at the time.

> *"We're saying we think that our response here shows we are addressing the issue the best way we can, and perhaps the situation (last fall) was exaggerated."*
>
> **— Kay Pride,** School district spokeswoman

Students from Chatfield High School and the surrounding area were involved in those incidents, said Boyd, who was unavailable for comment Wednesday.

"We haven't seen formalized street gangs but there are groups of kids that band together and give themselves names," Lt. Dave Taylor of the sheriff's department said Wednesday.

According to some accounts, the two Columbine killers may have targeted athletes because some of them harassed or abused them.

One Columbine parent said some athletes do that. Steve Greene said that for two years two athletes who were on the wrestling and football teams physically abused his son and intimidated him daily. They also made anti-Semitic remarks regularly, Greene said.

Complaints to school administrators were ignored even after the boys were arrested for assault, Greene said. The harassment continued until last fall when he threatened a discrimination lawsuit and complained to the board of education.

"It's related (to the Tuesday murders) because the problem is these boys were against the jocks because they are protected in this school," Greene said. "They were not wrong."

Pride said the principal, Frank DeAngelis, met with all the parents and eventually "took appropriate disciplinary action" against the athletes. She would not elaborate because of state law protecting student records. DeAngelis could not be reached for comment.

But Columbine counselor Ryan Collins said athletes are not free to harass other students. "We don't tolerate harassment," he said. "We take that real seriously."

The nagging question: Did others help?

By Charley Able
News Staff Writer

JEFFERSON COUNTY — Authorities suspect that the complex, lethal plot played out at Columbine High School involved more than the two dead gunmen.

Investigators plan to talk to at least eight to 10 acquaintances of the gunmen.

"I think there is some evidence to suggest that other people were at least aware of what was going on and, as the sheriff (John Stone) indicated earlier, there are an awful lot of devices and this took a lot of time," said Dave Thomas, Jefferson County district attorney.

Thomas said his investigators have the names of those associated with the gunmen.

Jefferson County district attorney investigators were at the crime scene Wednesday. Denver District Attorney Bill Ritter pledged his assistance in the investigation, and newly appointed U.S. Attorney Tom Strickland also has offered assistance.

"We will not spare any expense. This is a community disaster," Thomas said.

"I think we have to pursue vigorously, at least for the time being, the idea that there may have been other people involved at least in the planning and knowledge that this might occur."

To back up his suspicion that more people were involved, Thomas cited the presence of at least 30 explosive devices in and around the school and that a number of people were familiar with gunman Eric Harris' Web site, which advocated violence.

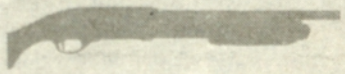
"There were other people who are knowledgeable or seemed to be associated with this group of people," Thomas said. "What we are a little bit unclear about is how all these devices got here and whether other people assisted them."

Weapons found

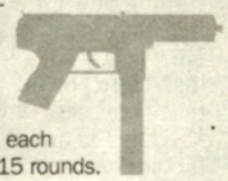
Some of the weapons used in the Columbine High School massacre:

GUNS

- Two pump-action shotguns with stocks cut off.



- One semi-automatic pistol. 8-9 spent ammo clips were found, each holding 12-15 rounds.



- One semi-automatic assault rifle.

BOMBS

A total of 30 devices were found at the school and more at one of the suspects' houses.

- 6- to 8-inch-long grenade-like devices.
- Foot-long pipe bombs – some with nails attached as shrapnel.
- Propane tank bombs.

Jefferson Co. District Attorney's Office News staff

TRAGEDY AT COLUMBINE

Teen leaps into arms of angels

Bloody and dazed boy did what he had to do to escape 'killing field'

By Norm Clarke
News Staff Writer

For a dazed and bloodied student about to plunge from a second-story window, they must have appeared as arms of angels.

Reaching up and grabbing the boy with only seconds to spare, two Lakewood SWAT members atop an armored truck produced a stirring and dramatic rescue.

"That kid is a hero," said one of his rescuers, Lakewood senior agent Donn Kraemer. "He was going to do what he had to do to live . . . to get out of that killing field."

Even in a state of shock.

"He wanted out so bad he was willing to take a header. There were bodies all around him," said Kraemer.

The Columbine High School student, who told rescuers his name was "Rich" or "Rick," had apparently survived the massacre in the school library, only to stare down at death again — from a shot-out library window.

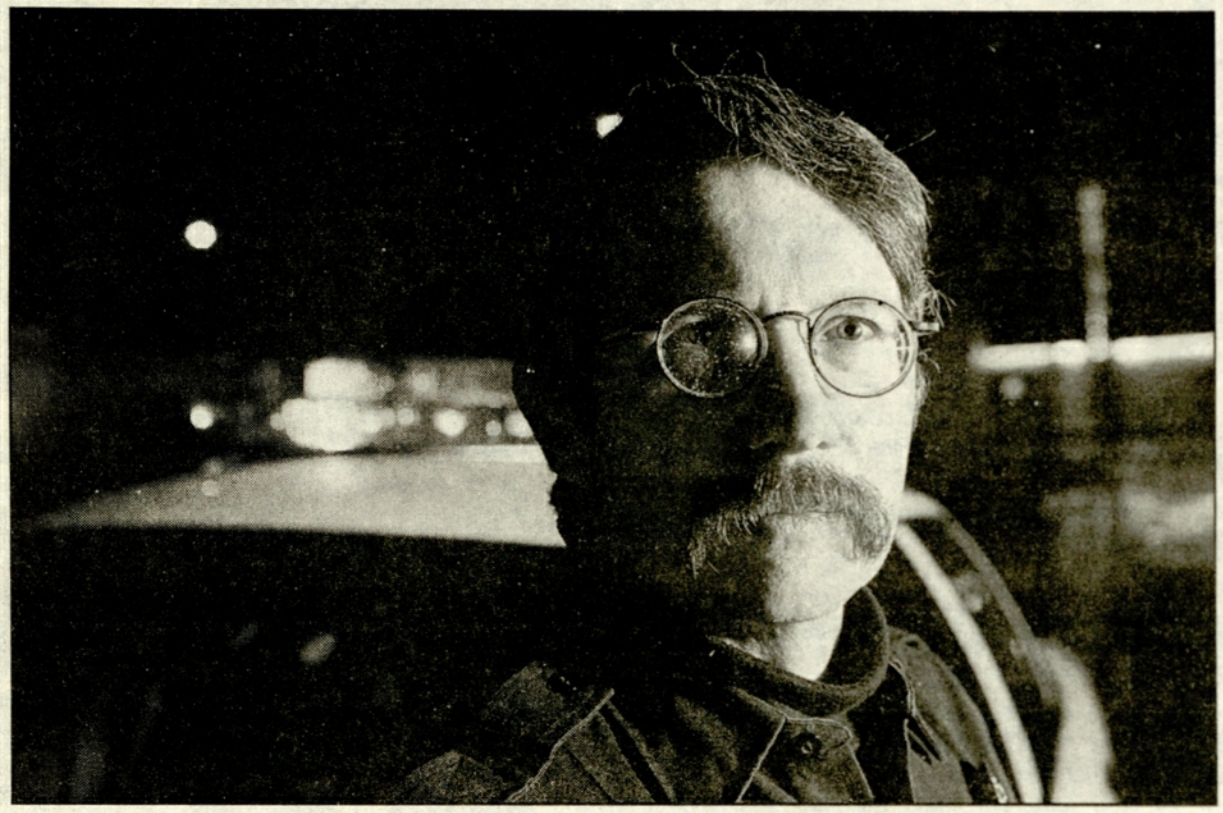
That's when the elite team, in a donated armored truck, came into the picture.

"We saw a sign in a window that said, 'Help! I'm bleeding to death,' " said Sgt. George Hinkle of the Lakewood SWAT, who commanded the operation.

Then they saw hands coming out of the window. Then a bloody head. Leaning over the broken window pane, the teen-ager tried a desperate escape from the horrific scene that engulfed him.

"I yelled at him to duck back in," Kraemer said. The student did, but only momentarily.

The armored truck moved in, but not close enough to break the boy's fall. Kraemer, 49, jumped on the hood and onto the vehicle's roof, with Sgt. John Ramoniec right behind.



Essdras M Suarez/News Staff Photographer

Peter Parker/Rocky Mountain News

Above, Senior Agent Donn Kraemer of the Lakewood Police is hailed as a hero for helping a Columbine High School student who escaped through a second floor window of the school. At left, a sign thanking emergency workers hangs on the back of a house on West Polk Avenue.

"We were just out of the comfortable zone of getting hold of him," Kraemer said. "He was coming out. I grabbed an arm and Sgt. Ramoniec grabbed the other. He was a bloody mess. We almost lost him. He hit the side of the truck real hard, unfortunately."

Kraemer and Ramoniec are reluctant heroes.

"We did what we are trained to do," Kraemer said.

"I wish I didn't have to be involved, and I wish we could have gotten more kids out," Ramoniec said.

Luck and a lie saved wrestler

Teen's shamrock cap his 'lucky charm'

By Norm Clarke
News Staff Writer

Columbine High sophomore Evan Todd lied when a gunman came into the library, shoved a shotgun in his face and asked him if he was a jock.

"I said no I wasn't," said the 15-year-old Todd, a member of the school's varsity wrestling team.

"I told him, 'I have no problem with you. I've never done anything to you. I just want to live.' "

He was spared, he's convinced, because he didn't wear his favorite baseball cap. The one with the word Navy on it.

The one he wore instead sported a shamrock.

"That was my lucky charm."

Todd figures he was among nine or 10 survivors from the library, where most of the bodies were found after two Columbine students went on a shooting rampage.

He was in the library Tuesday when he heard explosions in the hallway.

"I glanced around the corner of the library and they shot at me with a shotgun. I dove behind a coffee machine," said Todd.

One of the gunmen, identified by Todd as Dylan Klebold, walked up to him and put the shotgun in his face.

After the exchange, Klebold turned away.

"They (Klebold and Eric Harris) went walking up and down the aisles, watching each other's backs, shooting people on the floor."

One of the shooters turned back and sprayed bullets at the coffee machine, where Todd was taking shelter. He was treated for eight minor wounds from flying wood and plastic debris.

"I heard maybe 50-60 shots in the library and they chucked 4-5 pipebombs in the room," he said.

"They kept saying jocks made them feel like outcasts. Then they said they were going to the cafeteria to get more people," said Todd.

He bolted from the library when the gunmen left.

Todd had gone to the library Tuesday to work on a report.

Its title? *School uniforms, health behavior and crime.*

"It was about if kids wore uniforms would violence be reduced," Todd said. "I thought about it today, about what a coincidence."

He offered one other chilling detail.

The killers, who worked on the school broadcast TV staff, typed a message that showed up on study hall TV monitors listing events of the day.

The message: "Today is not going to be a good day."

Racial problems rare, Columbine students say

Report that gunmen targeted minorities raises new concerns

By Bob Jackson and April Washington
News Staff Writers

Racial problems are a rare occurrence at Columbine High School, blacks, whites and Hispanics agreed Wednesday.

"Everybody liked everyone at school," said Veronica Nuncio, a Hispanic 11th-grader at Columbine, who was at a makeshift memorial Wednesday at Clement Park. "I don't think any of the black and Hispanic students ever imagined they could become targets of a few nut cases."

Pam Glazner, co-editor of the Columbine student newspaper, *The Courier,* argued that the school's student body, for the most part, respects differences.

"Columbine didn't commit this crime," said the 18-year-old senior, who is white. "It was two isolated people who committed this horrific crime."

Nevertheless, the fact that minorities apparently were among those targeted has caused some students to question the state of race relations at the school.

Fear gripped Justin Norman, a 15-year-old freshman, when he learned that the gunmen had been looking for him because he is black. "Before this happened, most people got along," Norman said. "Now, you don't know what to expect."

Norman said that several weeks before the shooting, maintenance crews had removed racial slurs and swastikas from a bathroom stall near the cafeteria.

Race relations also were on the mind Wednesday of the local Million Man March organizing committee, said Alvertis Simmons, executive director.

"If the shootings were racially motivated, then we've got a lot of work to do in the suburbs," Simmons said.

His committee is planning a Million Youth Movement Workshop and Rally in Denver May 13-15. The event is the youth portion of the national Million Man March.

"We are asking not only black and brown kids to attend, but will now ask white kids to attend so that we can show some unity and stop this disunity among our communities," Simmons said.

"It shows that we've got some problems in the suburbs that are going to trickle down to the innercity and when it does, we are all going to have hell to pay."

Simmons said the Columbine shootings could have happened at any high school.

"We've got to work from the preventive side. I'm going to attend a couple of those vigils," he said. "We've got to show support. A white life is just as important as a black life. We are all important. Somehow or another these young people have got to understand that they are not by themselves. They got to cry out to somebody."

TRAGEDY AT COLUMBINE

Some districts ban trench coats

Officials say weapons can be hidden under the apparel, fear kids might be intimidated

By Suzanne Brown
News Staff Writer

School districts in Denver, Douglas County and parts of Adams County banned students Wednesday from wearing long trench coats in the wake of the Columbine High School shootings.

Officials said the coats were intimidating and inappropriate and could be used to hide weapons.

"We have excluded the long black coat because it makes it hard for us to guarantee the safety of our students," said Susan Carlson, spokeswoman for Adams 12 schools.

Wearing such a coat, she said, can also be "alarming enough to others that it disrupts the educational environment."

The gunmen in the Columbine High School shootings were part of what is known as the Trench Coat Mafia, after the group members' long black coats.

Cherry Creek high schools didn't ban trench coats, but deans contacted students who wear them, as well as their parents, and asked that students not wear their black coats, said Terry Conley, executive director of high school education for the district.

"We have told them that if they wear something that would be intimidating and create fear in others, it would be a violation of our policy," Conley said.

The trench coat ban was bad news for students such as Heather Shilling, 17, a junior at George Washington High School in Denver.

"I just like to dress in strange stuff — shiny clothes, army pants, black jeans and T-shirts," Shilling said. "I wear a trench coat because it has big pockets and I can put half of my personal belongings in it. I can also use it as a pillow or blanket."

Other school districts are asking administrators to be on alert but haven't changed their dress codes.

"We don't have a specific policy of banning black trench coats," said Debbie Lynch, spokeswoman for Aurora Public Schools.

"We told principals to be extra vigilant and use their own good judgment in terms of apparel and what is appropriate."

The Jefferson County School District, which includes Columbine, hasn't changed its dress code.

It allows individual schools and principals to set policy, said Kay Pride, district spokeswoman.

"It's all about music, Victorian culture and computers. It has nothing to do with violence or racism."

Laura Johansen, former Goth

Members say 2 had little in common with style, culture

Killers far from the Goth crowd

By Michael Mehle
News Staff Writer

The Columbine school killers shared the black clothing, white makeup and industrial music of the so-called Goth scene.

But that's where the similarity ended, say those close to the Goth crowd.

"The (shooters) are in no way representative of the Goth audience, in any stretch of the imagination," said David Clamage, owner of the Rock Island music club in LoDo. Rock Island has catered to the Goth crowd since the club opened more than a decade ago.

"These kids I see are just very passionate about their fashion and their music, and I have never in my 12½ years of Rock Island observed any violent tendencies. And I probably entertain more Goths than anyone else in Denver."

Goth is short for Gothic, a contemporary lifestyle that borrows from the Victorian era. Its followers wear black clothing and light makeup.

The scene revolves around music, although it now is tougher to peg what type of music that is. Ten years ago, it was predominantly melancholic pop artists such as the Smiths, Morrisey and the Cure, but today it varies from the hard-edged rock of Marilyn Manson to the fast beats and dance floor sound of techno and industrial rock.

"Gothic and industrial is a more melodic, sad and tranquil sort of rock that sort of puts you to sleep," said Tom Oberbroeckling, owner of the Snake Pit nightclub in Capitol Hill, which plays host to a Goth night every Wednesday.

On their Web site, the killers recited lyrics from KMFDM, an industrial band with German members. KMFDM stands for *Kein Mehrheit Fur Die Mitleid*, or No Pity for the Majority. The group recently disbanded and this week released its last album, *Adios*.

On Wednesday, the group's founder and former singer, Sascha Konietzko, issued a statement on the band's Web page decrying the killings.

"KMFDM (is) an art form — not a political party. From the beginning, our music has been a statement against war, oppression, fascism and violence against others," Konietzko said. "While some of the former band members are German as reported in the media, none of us condone any Nazi beliefs whatsoever."

Those who know the band's music agree and even cite songs such as *A Drug Against War*.

"It's goofy. It's no worse than pop," said Kevin Rolusbakken, a clerk at the Black & Read book store in Arvada, which has one of the city's largest collections of industrial and dance music. "They even have anti-war lyrics."

Laura Johansen, a former Goth who also works at Black & Read, says the scene is about an "aesthetic" and little else.

"It's all about music, Victorian culture and computers," she said. "It has nothing to do with violence or racism."

Oberbroeckling, who was readying his club for its weekly Goth night, concurred.

"That's the only night I don't have a police officer on duty," he said. "What does that tell you?"

Cyrus McCrimmon/News Staff Photographer

Mourners gather Wednesday around a sign adorned with flowers at Clement Park, north of Columbine High School. One mourner bore a sign on his clothes that denounced the swastika.

TRAGEDY AT COLUMBINE

Signs of trouble described

Experts say finding solution is difficult

By Tustin Amole
News Staff Writer

Didn't anybody see? Didn't anybody know?

The signs that Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris were about to explode in a murderous rage were there, experts say. The problem is finding the solution.

"You have kids who are grossly troubled, and with those kids they're lost. Often there's some violent acting-out behavior, obsession with weapons, conflicts with other children," said Aurora Rangeview Principal Marc Stine. "The challenge there, because of the nature of those problems, is to get parents to provide mental health care."

Aggression, defiance, cruelty to animals, bullying other children all are signs of a child in trouble, said Terry Levy of Evergreen Consultants of Human Behavior.

"A lot of these youngsters are on the fringe, they are disenfranchised, demoralized and can be very much influenced by a peer group," he said.

Those teens will seek out others like themselves who will readily accept them, Levy said. And that reinforces the negative behavior.

Unfortunately, parents may be the last to recognize what's going on, assuming that such behavior is typical of the teen years.

"It's very normal for them to have their stereo on full-blast," said Larry Sullivan, assist executive director of the National Association of School Psychologists. "But, when you see a gradual continual and complete withdrawal where they won't even fight with you anymore, then you have to act."

Many children who kill suffer from what experts call detachment disorder. They don't feel the normal empathy for others and show a callous disregard for the consequences of their actions, Levy said.

"There should be this voice that says that this is wrong," he said. "A lot of kids get angry — that's normal, but these kids have disregard for the feelings of others."

Warning signs may include: Serious physical fighting with peers or family members, severe rage for seemingly minor reasons, detailed threats of lethal violence, possession and/or use of firearms and other weapons and self-hatred behavior or suicide threats.

When those things are present teachers need to call parents. Parents need to seek professional help and all must work together, Levy said.

George Kochaniec Jr./News Staff Photographer

Sarah DeJong, 35, wipes away tears after leaving flowers outside Columbine High School on Wednesday. DeJong, who has two small children, said she "can't imagine how it feels to be the parents of murdered students."

Security is under siege

School officials feel handcuffed providing safety for students

By Tustin Amole
News Staff Writer

Perhaps the blood bath Tuesday at Columbine High School shouldn't have been a surprise: Ten percent of high school students surveyed in 1997 by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention said they had carried a weapon onto school property.

In Colorado, 506 students were expelled during the 1997-1998 school year for bringing weapons to school, an 18 percent increase from the previous year.

District officials from all over the metro area said they will review safety procedures after the rampage. But most agree that it will take more than locked doors and armed guards.

"The biggest lessons to learn from this is we cannot use steel and concrete to make our kids safe," said Marc Stine, principal of Rangeview High School in Aurora. "It's a question of acceptance and tolerance, and that's a lesson we can teach kids."

Many high schools, like Columbine, have open campuses allowing students to freely come and go. Officials say they can't manage large student populations for lunch periods, and locking them on campus all day isn't practical.

No schools in the metro area report having permanent metal detectors in place. Denver Public Schools has a metal detector for special events, and Aurora has two hand-held detectors that can be used if a situation warrants.

But many educators say permanent metal detectors aren't practical — or necessarily effective.

"The sad thing is that, if they'd had metal detectors at Columbine, the first fatality might well have been the metal detector operator," Denver Public Schools spokesman Mark Stevens said.

"Planning for the worst-case scenario is always hard to do," Jefferson County School District spokeswoman Kay Pride said.

Despite the tragedy at Columbine, experts say children are safer at school than they are driving there.

"We cannot diminish the magnitude of the tragedy, the loss of human life and the loss of innocence, but we have to understand this is an aberration," said Karen Duffala, a school safety expert at the Denver Research Institute at the University of Denver. "This is not a commentary on all our youth today, and this is not a commentary on our society."

But how do you tell that to children and parents who watched the tragedy unfold on live television?

Experts say schools can take action: They can erect fences around the property to limit access, install security cameras and train teachers to spot problem children. Many schools, including Columbine, have law enforcement officers on duty during classes.

"Much of the thinking on security talks about evacuation," Denver security expert David Forbes said. "But here we have a need to consider safe havens within the building structure itself."

— Staff writer Joe Garner contributed to this report.

Nuggets player relives grim memories

By Clay Latimer
News Staff Writer

The Columbine High School shootings hit home with Denver Nuggets forward Eric Washington.

Washington is a 1993 graduate of Pearl (Miss.) High School, where in 1997 Luke Woodham, 16, opened fire with a rifle, killing his former girlfriend and another student and wounding seven. When the rampage was over, police found he had also stabbed his mother to death.

Pearl was the first of seven school shootings to shake the nation this decade; Tuesday's massacre at Columbine was the deadliest.

And it brought back chilling memories.

Washington was in his rookie season in Denver when the killings occurred in the town of 22,000 outside Jackson.

"I called home and made sure everyone was OK. It was stunning," he said.

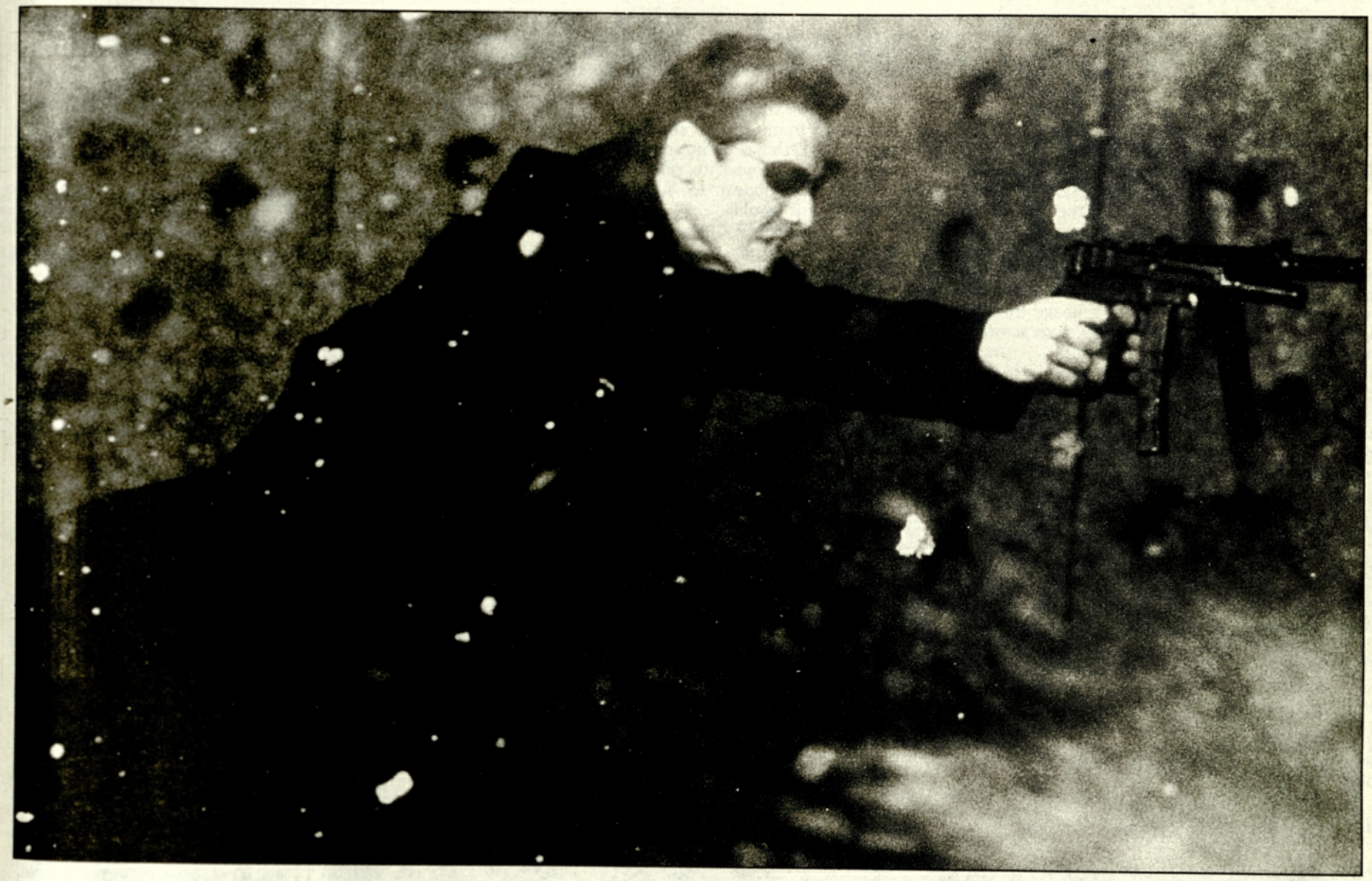
"But what happened here is even more stunning. Two deaths is two too many. I can't even imagine (15).

"It's an epidemic now; it's definitely an epidemic. The one at my school started it all, and then it happened in (West Paducah) Kentucky and now it happened here. Things are changing; people are changing."

The Pearl High shootings began about 8 a.m. Oct. 1 as buses arrived. Woodham entered the commons area just inside the front door of the school and immediately walked up to his former girlfriend. She was the first to fall, followed by three young men and five young women, apparently shot at random.

Police later found the body of Mary Woodham, 50, a divorcee, at her home about a mile from the school. She had been stabbed with a kitchen knife.

TRAGEDY AT COLUMBINE



Actor Keanu Reeves fires away in *Matrix*, one of many recent movies that blur the line between computers and reality.

Movies echo harsh reality — or do they?

Robert Denerstein

In the enormously popular new movie *Matrix,* Keanu Reeves wears a black duster and battles the forces of evil with two-fisted bursts of gunfire. He stages an attack on the conspiracy that has turned his life into a living hell.

The movie already is being mentioned as a possible source of influence on the Trench Coat Mafia, two of whose members entered Columbine High School Tuesday carrying weapons and wearing long black coats.

It's not the first time movies have been connected with real-life violence. The families of three students killed in a high school shooting recently sued several entertainment companies for $130 million, charging that violent computer games, Internet porn and Leonardo DiCaprio's *Basketball Diaries* contributed to the attack. During a drug-induced dream sequence, DiCaprio's character guns down a teacher and some classmates.

Such specificity may seem far-fetched, but it's clear that teen culture provides eerie echoes of current reality, a reality that embraces many of the elements found in Tuesday's tragedy at Columbine.

As a movie critic, I tend to believe that movies do more to reflect reality than to shape it, but my first thought upon hearing about the Columbine shootings was that they can't entirely be separated from cultural currents that float like deadly pollen into the nostrils of the young.

A survey of recent movies helps make the case. Computer games and virtual reality have become full-blown big-screen preoccupations. One member of the Trench Coat Mafia was said to be an avid player of the game Doom.

Matrix, a special-effects-laden drama that imagines a world in which machines control humans, deals with the addictive power of computer-generated fantasy. Similarly, a new movie from David Cronenberg, *eXistenZ,* shows that virtual games can become alarmingly real to those who play them. In both cases, the clash between reality and machine-generated fantasy involves violence.

Cronenberg's movie doesn't open until Friday, but it's part of a cultural climate in which technology and violence are closely linked, and I confess that I had a more difficult time reviewing *eXistenZ* in the wake of Tuesday's events. Moreover, there's little question that with each passing movie, the cinematic imagination must push a little harder to provide us with shocks.

Just as tellingly, it has been reported that the Columbine assailants were acting out a revenge saga for perceived mistreatment at the hands of popular students. The victims had to pay for treating the killers badly.

Teen revenge fantasies long have been commonplace in the movie marketplace.

The latest, *The Rage: Carrie 2* revolves around cruel athletes who play a malicious game. They score points by sleeping with unpopular girls and then dumping them. *Carrie 2,* of course, is a sequel to Brian de Palma's original *Carrie,* a 1976 movie that has become part of teen lore. In it, an emotionally wounded Sissy Spacek turned her prom into a fiery hell.

In both movies, humiliation leads to violence and sympathy generally accrues to the person who, because of mistreatment from peers, explodes with rage.

Wearing a trench coat, actress Courtney Cox brandishes a handgun in the movie *Scream2.*

A bit of anger and alienation is an inevitable part of teen life, but my experience with high school students (I occasionally speak to film classes) tells me they have no trouble distinguishing between fantasy and reality. Yet, the sheer quantity of violence — as much as its quality — may have numbed them (and us) to its impact.

The shootings at Columbine were carried out by gunmen (maybe gun-children is a better word) who reportedly laughed and whooped as they fired their weapons. Where could they have gotten the idea that violence is fun?

I don't mean to pick on *Matrix,* but its finale is typical of much big-screen carnage, violence that's meant to be more exhilarating than chastening. Sensation overwhelms reason.

Can blame be assigned? Probably not.

The Supreme Court recently quashed a lawsuit that sought to blame Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers* for leading a couple to shoot a woman during a 1995 robbery.

The court understood that we're not operating in a world ruled by the strict logic of cause-and-effect. Lines are increasingly fuzzy. For example, how do you judge violence when it's presented for laughs?

The recent *Jawbreaker,* a darkly hued high-school comedy, told the story of popular girls who kill one of their friends during a prank — and then try to cover up their crime. It's part of a spate of movies that treat violence with ironic humor.

Moreover, teen horror long has served a potent cocktail of fear and rage, finding its way to the screen in such popular movies as *Nightmare on Elm Street* and *Scream.*

I don't believe we are what we see, but every time we find ourselves dealing with a Columbine-like tragedy, I wonder whether movies haven't made a quiet contribution. There must be some consequences for a medium in which violence has gone too far in replacing drama and in which most conflict leads to bloodshed.

Don't believe me?

Then ask yourself a simple question: When's the last time you saw a movie in which someone didn't draw a gun?

TRAGEDY AT COLUMBINE

AOL freezes shooter's Web site

Online pages included pipe bomb information

By Kevin Flynn
News Staff Writer

America Online pulled and preserved Columbine High School shooter Eric Harris' Internet writings in anticipation of a subpoena to turn it over to the FBI and Jefferson County authorities.

Because of AOL's policy on members' privacy, a spokeswoman declined to say whether the Internet service also has an account for the second gunman, Dylan Klebold.

Some material copied from Harris' Internet site before it was taken off-line Tuesday include a lengthy discussion of pipe bomb construction, recipes for napalm and storage of explosives.

The teen shooters used various kinds of bombs during their attack.

Another page included a reproduction of an image from a notebook. It shows several violent figures such as a sword-and-gun-wielding man standing atop a pile of burning skulls, another gunman firing two weapons into a bloody victim standing below him, and a horned creature with claw-like hands.

The image, scanned into the computer from a thin sheet of paper, also shows faint impressions from the opposite side, including what appear to be diagrams of pipe bombs.

The material that was frozen from Harris' Web pages when AOL took them off-line may be useful to police, said AOL spokeswoman Kim McCreery.

That Harris was an avid Internet user didn't surprise experts who watch youth subcultures such as Gothics, some of whom are into dark clothing, pagan religions and vampirism.

Although a friend of Harris denied that the self-styled Trench Coat Mafia that Harris and Klebold were part of was a Gothic group, its adherents wore black trench coats like those favored by Gothics.

Experts said there is so much spillover of fads and trends among youth subcultures that the mere adoption of a certain wardrobe doesn't mean an individual holds to all of the lifestyles or philosophies of a group.

"I work with Goths that are progressive, radical and anarchist in several anti-racist and reproductive-rights coalitions," said Chip Berlet of Political Research Associates in Somerville, Mass. "I also am aware of the right-wing variety."

Vigil moves trio

A community vigil at Civic Center Park on Wednesday night stirs emotions in three students at the event. From left are Rachel Roof, 16, a sophomore at Littleton High School; Rhianna Cheek, 15, a sophomore at Douglas County High School; and Mandi Annivel, 16, a sophomore at Heritage High School.

Essdras M Suarez/News Staff Photographer

Police dispute charges they were too slow

By Kevin Vaughan
News Staff Writer

Chaos, gunfire, panic and teenagers streaming from a death scene and in the aftermath, law enforcement officials found themselves assaulted Wednesday by critics who said they hadn't moved quickly enough to stop the bloodshed.

"We had 1,800 kids rushing from the school," Jefferson County sheriff's deputy Steve Davis responded. "The officers had no idea which were victims and which were potential suspects."

But still questions lingered.

Michael Staver, 17, wondered whether one of his teachers might be alive if he'd been rescued more quickly. Instead, the teacher, Dave Sanders, spent 3½ hours in the school with two gunshot wounds in the chest before the SWAT team got to him.

"A lot of people are angry," Staver said.

The criticism isn't fair, said Deputy Neil Gardner, whose first introduction to the Columbine massacre was a face-to-face encounter with a gunman.

As gunfire and bomb blasts reverberated through the high school, Gardner ran into a hallway and faced off with one of the two gun-toting teen-agers.

Gardner and the gunman shot it out before the Jefferson County deputy retreated to call for help. Minutes later, two other Jefferson County officers — Lt. Terry Manwaring and Deputy Paul Smoker — fired on the teen and his partner while trying to protect paramedics rushing to help the wounded.

Within 20 minutes of the first panicked call for help, a makeshift six-man SWAT team rushed into the sprawling school, and within an hour, dozens of heavily armed officers in body armor launched a methodical, room-by-room search of the building.

And yet police officials still found themselves defending their response Wednesday.

Officers say that in chaotic scenes like the one that played out Tuesday, they must consider a number of other factors before storming a building.

The top priority is to help the wounded and contain the violence. That doesn't necessarily mean rushing into a building right away.

"No training (adviser) in the world would tell a small number of officers to go in," Westminster police officer Dan Mayer said.

It's a double-edged sword. Stay outside, and more people could be killed; rush in, and the death toll could rise.

Getting an officer shot does nothing for the victims, Mayer said, and it puts a police radio, another gun and more ammunition into the hands of a killer.

Not everybody was critical of the work of police in the midst of the havoc.

Laurie Senti, whose 14-year-old daughter, Ashley Steele, is a freshman at the school, rushed to Columbine as soon as she heard about the shooting. She ran across a golf course and crawled under a fence, then endured an agonizing three-and-a-half-hour wait for word about her daughter.

Ashley had survived by hiding in a locked room for hours after the gunfire.

"I don't know what else the police department could have done."

GLIMPSES

Following Tuesday's massacre, Denver officials want to cancel a concert by shock rocker Marilyn Manson — whose songs dealing in death and violence are favored by youths in the Gothic subculture.

Manson was to kick off Red Rocks Amphitheatre's summer concert series April 30.

A radio sponsor said the concert is likely to be called off, but a definite announcement won't come until today.

■ Larry and Karen Klebold of Broomfield have been given an insight into the workings of the modern media.

The couple began receiving dozens of phone calls Tuesday afternoon, once the name of the Columbine killers became public. One of them, Dylan Klebold, shares a last name but is no relation.

"I've since learned that I'm apparently the only Klebold listed in the Colorado telephone directory," Larry Klebold said Wednesday. "My telephone hasn't stopped ringing since this whole thing started."

He ticked off a lengthy list of media outlets demanding to know if he was the father of one of the two gunmen, one from as far away as Australia.

The family has received a number of harassing calls as well.

"I got a call at 3 o'clock in the morning from someone who says, 'Are you the guy who raised this bastard?' " he said.

■ Authorities are trying to determine whether a gun heist in Douglas County on Tuesday night is connected to the Columbine massacre.

"There is a possibility of a link, but that is not something set in concrete," said Douglas County Sheriff's Deputy Kim Stuckenschneider.

About 8:50 p.m. Tuesday, two teen males smashed a glass display case at Jumbo Sports, 7848 County Line Road in Lone Tree. They ran off with four handguns.

Joel David Freiboth, 18, a former Columbine High School student, was arrested on suspicion of robbery and criminal mischief. A 17-year-old male was also arrested. Linda Williams, whose once lived with Freiboth's family, was surprised.

"Joel just seemed real level-headed. He is your typical teen-ager except that he is really interested in current events," Williams said. "He is not your reckless, out-of-control teen-ager."

■ Denver high schools were closed Wednesday because police were warned that Kennedy High School might suffer like Columbine High.

District officials also wanted a day to talk about the possibility that violent, disenfranchised students like those at Columbine were roaming Denver hallways.

All Denver schools are open today.

■ The school shooting was front page news in most American newspapers, but not the *Chicago Sun-Times*.

Editors believed the carnage that swept through the high school was too violent for the front page.

Concerned about the possibility that such prominent display "could harm or frighten vulnerable children," the *Sun-Times* spread the story on pages 2, 3 and 4.

"We see a danger that publicity surrounding such attacks could be contributing to the phenomenon," the paper added in a three-paragraph, front-page note to readers explaining its decision.

It was the second time that the *Sun-Times* decided to play school violence inside rather than on the front page. The first came after a May 21, 1998, shooting in Springfield, Ore., in which two teen-agers were shot to death and more than 20 people hurt.

TRAGEDY AT COLUMBINE

Strickland sworn in as U.S. attorney 10 days early

By Karen Abbott
News Staff Writer

Denver lawyer Tom Strickland was quietly sworn in 10 days ahead of schedule Wednesday as Colorado's new U.S. attorney because of Tuesday's tragedy at Columbine High School.

"It seemed appropriate, due to the events of the last 24 hours at Columbine, to move the swearing-in up a little bit and have a U.S. attorney in place," said Dick Weatherbee, spokesman for the U.S. attorney's office in Denver.

Weatherbee declined to comment further. Strickland couldn't be reached Wednesday.

Strickland

Chief Denver U.S. District Judge Richard Matsch said he administered the oath of office to Strickland in his chambers about 2 p.m. Strickland's wife and Steve Ehrlich, deputy clerk of Colorado's federal trial courts, also were present.

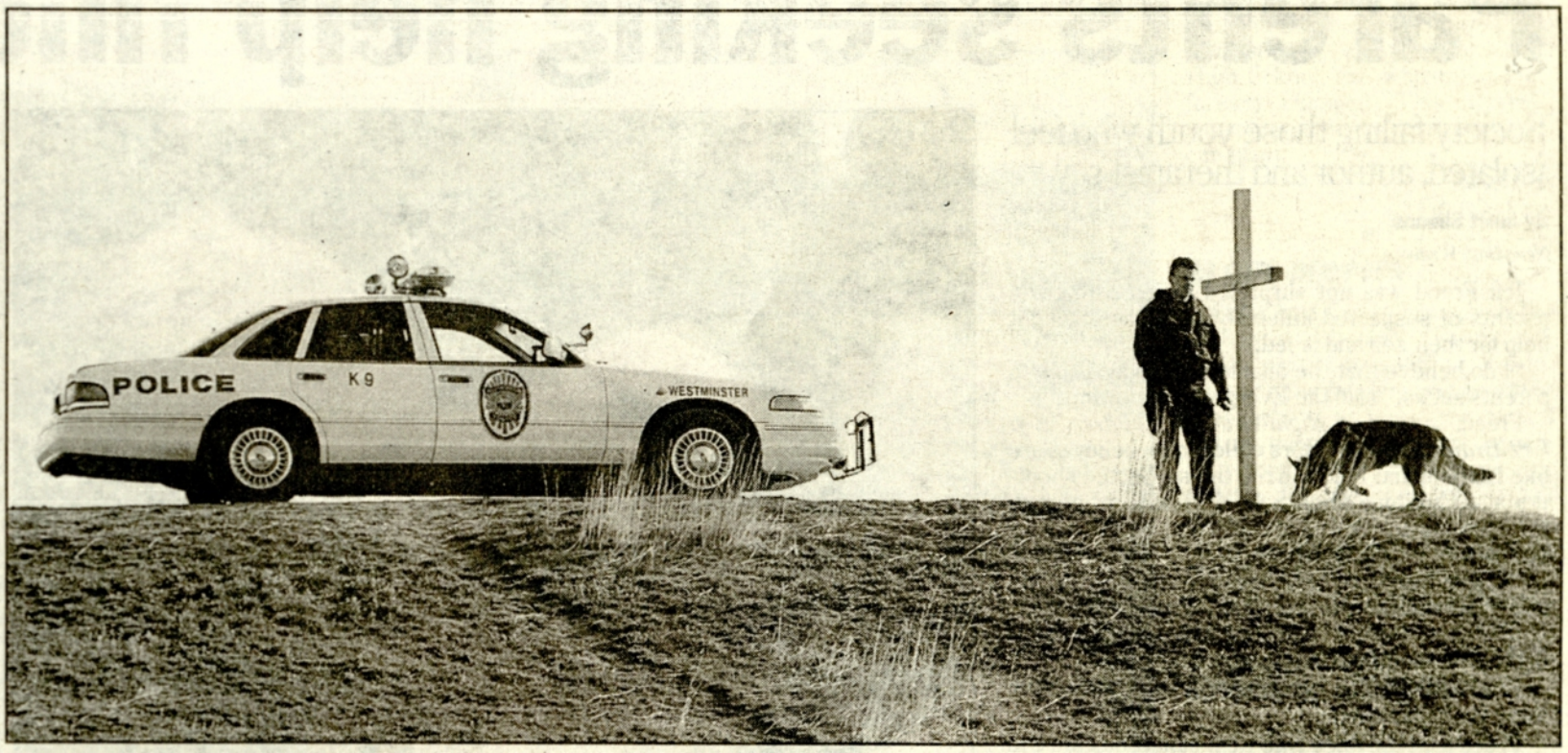
Strickland's formal swearing-in had been planned April 30 in a federal courtroom packed with spectators, followed by a hotel reception. Matsch said that ceremony still will occur as scheduled.

"He called me this morning and said that he'd been requested to take the oath and be sworn in earlier, and I said come on over," Matsch said.

Former U.S. Attorney Henry Solano late last year moved to Washington, D.C., to become solicitor general for the U.S. Department of Labor.

Strickland, 46, most recently was a partner in the Denver law firm of Brownstein, Hyatt, Farber and Strickland.

A watchful eye



Linda McConnell/News Staff Photographer

Westminster police officer Brian Hempelmann and his dog stand watch Wednesday over Columbine High School on a hill near the school.

Global condemnation

Around the world, nations blame U.S. films, gun laws

By Holger Jensen
News International Editor

World reaction to the school shooting in Jefferson County is universally critical of the easy availability of guns in the United States and the "violent society" spawned by American films.

Berlin's *Tagespiegel* headlined its story: "Amok in Littleton."

Iran's state television allotted 10 minutes to the "shocking and deadly tragedy" that caused "widespread repugnance" in Islamic nations. It denounced the "abundant use of sex and violence" in U.S. films, which it blamed for the "wave of crime" in Western societies.

Yugoslavia, after a month of NATO airstrikes, said the shooting illustrated the "American values" Washington is trying to impose on the Balkans. The state news agency Tanjug said it was "another manifestation of how profoundly disturbed American society is."

It blamed President Clinton for setting a bad example with policies that show "America solves its problems by force." And it accused him of hypocrisy for advising American youths to resolve their anger with words rather than violence while "telling these same young people on television that it is good and just to kill people in Yugoslavia with bombs."

> *"There are an estimated 200 million guns in America... and the differences between it and other countries are stark."*
>
> **London *Telegraph***

British Defense Secretary George Robertson said the United States should heed the example of his country's tight gun control laws, imposed after 16 kindergarten children and their teacher were gunned down by a gun owner in Scotland three years ago.

"I hope that they will look carefully at what this country did in banning handguns after the Dunblane massacre, and I hope we never have to wake up to this sort of news again from America," he told the British Broadcasting Corp.

The London *Telegraph* cited a 1997 study that found the firearm-related death rate among American children younger than 15 was nearly 16 times higher than that of other industrialized countries.

"There are an estimated 200 million guns in America — where only seven states ban the carrying of concealed weapons — and the differences between it and other countries are stark," the *Telegraph* said. "In 1996 handguns were used to murder 30 people in Britain, 106 in Canada, 211 in Germany and 9,390 in America."

"How sick is the gun society of America?" asked the *Yomiuri* daily in Japan. The other big national paper there, *Asahi*, said: "The shooting has brought to light once again the warped strains of 'an advanced society'."

Asahi interviewed the mother of a 16-year-old Japanese exchange student who was fatally shot in Louisiana while looking for a Halloween party. "Guns are everywhere," said Mieko Hattori. "Even a high school student can get them."

Australian Prime Minister John Howard said he was "sickened" by the shooting. And Education Minister David Kemp said tighter gun laws could have prevented it.

"The ready availability of guns in the United States has contributed to a culture where even very young people who don't have any obvious reason for possession of firearms have got access to them," he said.

Teams to don Columbine insignia on uniforms

Rockies, Avalanche, Nuggets will wear school patch, donate money to families

By Clay Latimer
News Staff Writer

The Colorado Rockies, Colorado Avalanche and Denver Nuggets plan to wear their emotions about the Columbine High School tragedy on their sleeves.

Starting today, the right sleeve of Rockies uniforms will bear a Columbine High patch with the school's colors and script. The Avalanche plans to wear a similar patch as well on the sleeves of its sweaters.

Nuggets uniforms will bear a small patch on the shoulder area. The Nuggets and Avalanche also plan to donate money from their community fund to victims and their families.

"This will let the people know we're thinking about them," Nuggets forward Eric Washington said.

"That's a really good thing," Nuggets forward Johnny Taylor said. "I wish there were something else we could do to try to help the families. I know they're going through a trying time right now. It's just something we can do in their honor."

Nuggets guard Chauncey Billups is a Denver native who played basketball for George Washington High School. He played several games at Columbine during his four-year high school career.

"This city is really devastated right now," he said. "Everybody is sad; that's all you hear right now on TV, on the street. All you hear is people talking about this tragedy. It's going to stick around with people for a long time.

"(The patch) is definitely appropriate. We have hearts, too. And our hearts go out to all these families."

The Nuggets postponed Tuesday's game against Portland until May 2, but went ahead with their scheduled practice Wednesday at the University of Denver.

"It drains you mentally and there's nothing you can do," coach Mike D'Antoni said of the Columbine tragedy. "You feel helpless. This is almost an outlet for (the players)."

News staff writer Jim Benton contributed to this report.

TRAGEDY AT COLUMBINE

Parents seeking help find little

Society failing those youth who feel isolated, author and therapist say

By Janet Simons
News Staff Writer

Jeff Freed was not surprised to learn that the parents of suspected killer Dylan Klebold sought help for their son and failed.

"I do believe that the quality of help available to parents sucks," said the Evergreen educator.

Freed, author of *Right-Brained Children in a Left-Brained World,* tutors children he believes are like Klebold and Eric Harris, the suspected shooters at Columbine High School — kids who grow increasingly frustrated and isolated because their brains are "wired differently."

"These kids tend to be creative, artistic, moody and hypersensitive to criticism," Freed said.

They are "visual" learners who grew up inundated with electronic stimulation, he said.

But that's true of lots of people who don't blow away their classmates.

Freed said the ones who turn dangerous are the ones who can't find support and validation.

"These kids give clear signals very early. . . . School tends to frustrate them. Parents may go to a school counselor who's no more than a yes man for the district.

"They get tormented because they're different. Then, because of the culture we live in, they're able to find kids who feel the same way — at violent movies or on the Internet."

The key, he said, is to reach these children early and appreciate how their learning styles differ.

Family therapist Yehuda Fine also says society fails to address the issues underlying school violence. Fine, of New York City, is in Evergreen to address educators about school violence.

Fine, too, laments the lack of help for parents. "We are so isolated, so busy, that we ignore the desperation that goes on behind closed doors."

Fine said Klebold and Harris gave ample warning they were on the edge, including leaving violent clues on the Internet.

"If these loners and outcasts are left to themselves, their anger will come out in very dark ways," Fine said.

Fine says the solution will require deep changes in families.

"Kids don't get violent because of rock concerts and television, but from lack of love and the inability to express love," he said.

"If we make clothes the culprit, we miss the point. Parents have to be communicating with their kids."

Ken Papaleo/News Staff Photographer

A mother comforts her daughter Wednesday at Clement Park, where hundreds gathered to mourn those killed at Columbine High School.

Coping

Colorado children and teens are likely to feel anxious and fearful about the Columbine shootings for weeks to come.

Following are symptoms experts say are normal: Clinginess, anger, apathy, avoidance, regression, feeling overwhelmed, nightmares, fear, headaches, diarrhea, shakiness, sleeplessness, trouble concentrating, avoiding school, drop in grades, preoccupation with the event, irregular eating patterns, emotional outbursts and feelings of helplessness.

Here is when to seek professional counseling for you or your child:

If any of the above stress symptoms persist or intensify over a period of weeks; if you don't feel able to give enough support to those depending on you; if your child refuses to talk to you or indicates he's going to harm himself or others; if your child asks for help; if your child has suffered a similar trauma whose memory may be triggered.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

- Encourage your child to talk about his feelings.
- Listen calmly.
- Tell your child no one is ever really prepared for such a violent experience, and acknowledge how shocking it is. A helpful response is: "I'm just so sorry that you had to go through this. You thought school was safe, and this time, it wasn't." Remind your child of all the people who love him and are watching out for him. Remind him you will do everything you can to keep him safe.
- Don't be surprised if your child shuts down for a few days. Lend support.
- Limit TV, and watch it with your child.
- Spend time together taking walks, playing games.
- Let your child get together with peers.
- Correct rumors; give factual information.
- Don't reveal your hopelessness or overdramatize the event.
- Participate in memorials, funerals, moments of silence.
- Work as a family to effect social change.
- Be hopeful; assure children that they will feel safe again.
- Don't unnecessarily restrict activities.
- Remember that "normal reactions" vary.

Sources: Dr. Jeffrey Dolgan, head of psychology at Children's Hospital; Jefferson Center for Mental Health in Arvada; Denver's Trauma Treatment Center; Looking Glass Youth and Family Services in Springfield, Ore.

J. Scott Applewhite/Associated Press

President Clinton bows his head in prayer for shooting victims and their families Wednesday.

Clinton calls for unity, prayer

By Michael Romano
News Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — A somber President Clinton offered a personal prayer Wednesday to the victims of the Columbine High School massacre, calling for a moment of silence during a speech to White House volunteers.

"I think it is important on this day," said the president, eyes downcast, "that we continue to offer the people of Colorado, the people of Littleton, the families involved, the sure knowledge that all of America cares for them and is praying for them."

The president, joined by first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, made an unscheduled appearance in the Old Executive Office Building's Presidential Hall to address about 160 White House volunteers who were expecting a few words of praise for their yearlong contributions from White House chief of staff John Podesta.

Instead, Clinton — on hand only because the massacre forced him to cancel a trip to Texas — addressed the bloody siege that has now claimed at least 15 lives.

"It happens that this day was scheduled on what turned out to be a very sad day for America," Clinton said.

Calling the volunteers "the best of American citizenship," Clinton said it is vital to remember that the nation must "come together and pray together — but also commit to act together" to deal with tragedies like the siege at Columbine High School.

Clinton, who said the "horror and agony" of the tragedy "bring us together as a national community," praised the work of the police officers, the students who risked their own lives for classmates and the doctors and paramedics who helped the wounded.

"I have been particularly struck by the story of Mrs. (Theresa) Miller, the science teacher who heard the gunfire and led dozens of students to safety in the choir room, who worked to keep them calm and quiet for hours while students removed ceiling tiles to let in more air."

Added Clinton: "Perhaps the most important thing all of us can do right now is to reach out to each other and to families and their young children.

"It is very important to explain to children, all over America, what has happened, and to reassure our own children that they are safe," he said.

As he did during a White House briefing on Tuesday just hours after the shooting, the president reserved any comments about specific plans on legislation or any executive actions.

"In the days ahead," he said, "we will see what else can be done."

Then the president asked for a moment of prayer, the silence in the hall broken only by the sharp click-click-click of automatic cameras.

TRAGEDY AT COLUMBINE: VOICES

The *Denver Rocky Mountain News* received dozens of faxes and e-mails from across the country following the tragic events at Columbine High School. This page and the next include a sampling of those. Others will appear in subsequent issues. For an online discussion, go to InsideDenver.com.

Ken Papaleo/Rocky Mountain News

An unidentified student embraces her mother after the two were reunited after Tuesday's shooting.

Terrorists, evildoers don't like taking risks

Schools make attractive targets for the deranged. For cowards who crave media attention, such as the PLO in the '70s or the suicidal murderers at Columbine High, nothing grabs headlines and TV coverage more than an attack on a school full of defenseless children.

In May 1974, three PLO terrorists took 100 children and their teachers hostage in Israel. They exploded bombs and sprayed the kids with gunfire, wounding 66 and killing 25. A controversial debate erupted regarding guns and self-defense. The same factually unfounded arguments we have heard lately were made by well-meaning people. However, reason prevailed and whoever had a clean record (sound familiar?) could get a concealed weapon permit.

Teachers quietly began carrying guns and schools were protected by parents and grandparents guarding them in voluntary shifts. When the message got around to PLO groups and a couple of infiltration attempts failed, attacks against schools ceased. Terrorists don't like risks.

In 1987 Florida adopted its state controlled "must issue" concealed-carry law. The rate of violent crimes against people dropped dramatically (as it has in every state with similar laws). Evildoers don't like risks.

As a disabled law-abiding citizen, I don't like risks either. We need to consider the rights and welfare of the less able members of this great state who deserve the means to save their lives when horror stalks. We have been shown by a majority of states and by the Israelis it is the right and courageous thing to do.

Forrest Luff
Evergreen

Tragedy points out great needs in society

The tragedy at Columbine High School points out great needs in our society today. I would like to offer four suggestions:

First, we need strong, sane gun control laws. Australia had one mass murder and immediately saw their Parliament pass one of the best gun-control laws in the world. I have been a life-long Republican, but if the Republicans do not get behind a bipartisan gun-control bill, I am leaving the party.

Second, we need to begin to boycott Hollywood's graphically violent productions. While I am convinced a movie or rap song cannot unbalance a sane young person, I am equally convinced these images fuel the twisted imaginations of the mentally ill. For instance, Keanu Reeves wore a long, black duster filled with numerous guns in *The Matrix*. Had these young killers seen that movie before going on their spree? I do not know, but we have to stop explaining away these "coincidences" and accept our responsibility for pushing graphic violence in the name of entertainment.

Third, we must reach out to the young people within our domain of relationships and responsibility. Somehow we must befriend the friendless and defuse the angry time bombs ticking away in so many young lives.

I would also like to suggest we revisit the idea of school uniforms that take away the opportunities to hide weapons and express rage and class divisions within our schools.

Michael D. Nelson
Evergreen

We're not looking so good these days

After the shootings in Kentucky, I'd asked my former sixth-grade teacher what her kids were like today. She said, "They know all the sex words and four-letter words and know how to use them." Then she paused before adding firmly, "But they're still 12-year-olds."

I am writing because I am concerned, as are millions of Americans in offices and classrooms this morning, about us. We're not looking so good these days.

I know the kids who did the shooting. I've never met them, but my friends in school were the different kids, the weird ones sitting alone at study hall tables with dark clothes and funny hair. I mourn them as much as the innocents. My friends held hands through their differences, hardening their sensibilities into rugged individualism. The kids in Colorado, however, shrank smaller and smaller, striking from inside their collapsing security.

No one knows why people band together. No one understands why we fall into the confused embrace of a cult or clasp the gritty handshake of gang membership. We do know that something must be done, that we must take hands and look out for our own. But now is the time for mourning.

Christina Vance
Athens, Ohio

TV put lives at risk

Why was the television media broadcasting pictures of students escaping from Columbine High School and the SWAT team approaching various areas of the school building? That put those people still inside, and the SWAT team, at risk because there were TVs in the school the gunmen could have been watching. It's incredibly irresponsible.

The Denver media did the same thing about two years ago when a police officer was shot and a SWAT team had to confront the gunman inside an apartment building. Police had to yell at cameramen to turn off their lights because the gunman could see exactly where they were positioned around the building.

I'm all for free speech and "the public's right to know," but people's lives were at stake here. Perhaps we need some new laws to limit local media coverage when someone's life is at risk.

Tammy Otto
Denver

Where were parents?

My heart goes out to the victims and the families in the Columbine tragedy. Words are not nearly enough for them in this difficult time.

Some of the many questions that come to my mind, though, are: Where did these kids get the money for all these weapons and BMWs? And just where are the parents? How could these kids live such a dark life without the parents being aware? And if they were aware, what were they doing about it? Nothing it would seem. Why not?

It's so easy to blame it all on everyone else, but where were the parents?

Mark Krotz
Mesa, Ariz.

Police paid to do a job

Regarding the shootings at Columbine High School, I have to ask, just what were the police doing while the two juvenile gunmen spent a hour shooting people in the school? From what I have read, the SWAT teams, with their machine guns and bulletproof vests, didn't move in until the shooting was over. To me, this reflects either incompetence or sheer cowardice.

Police are paid to do a job. Sometimes that involves getting shot at. If these officers were so scared of a couple of armed punks, they need to change careers. They sure don't belong on the street with a gun on their hip.

Christopher R. Gonzalez
Dearborn Heights, Mich.

Condolences from Africa

I am a Namibian and a Colorado School of Mines alumnus who lived in the Denver area (my second home) for eight years. I keep up with happenings in Denver through your Web site. I was shocked and dismayed to read about the tragic shooting spree at Columbine High School.

I wish to convey my condolences to the people of Colorado and in particular to the families, relatives and friends of those who perished at the hands of those thugs who perpetrated this cold-blooded act of cowardice. May the Lord be with them and comfort them during this dark moment.

Kennedy Hamutenya
Windhoek, Namibia

Lives forever changed

I wish to express my deepest condolences to the families of the individuals slain and injured Tuesday in this overwhelming tragedy. My prayers are for each of them as they endure the unendurable agony of that tragic day and their attempt to answer the unanswerable question, "Why?"

I also pray for the anonymous members of the SWAT teams who courageously entered Columbine High School, and whose lives are forever changed. This horrible, senseless violence must never occur again.

R.S. Cross
La Grande, Ore.

In our prayers

I was horrified to hear about the incident at Columbine High School. I just wanted to send my condolences to the families and friends of those who have lost someone and just let them all know that we will be remembering them all in our prayers for the strength to get through what will be difficult days to come as "the world" descends on their community. God bless you all.

Peter O'Donovan
London

Breeding alligators

If I raise an alligator in my basement and then allow it to roam free in a public school, I am going to be held liable for any damage to humanity?

Should we treat parents who allow alligators to breed in bedrooms of their homes any differently?

Charles James
Northglenn

Unmatched coverage

Thank you, especially Mike Anton and the reporters on the scene, for the thorough coverage of the devastating shootings Tuesday. Your stories made me cry and care in a way that the constant CNN barrage couldn't match. Keep up the excellent work.

Joe Beaird
New York City

We are at war

It's an old saying: "In peacetime children bury their parents and in a war parents bury their children." We are at war, and we are all prisoners of it. This is not Kosovo; it's our home and our hometown.

Fred Abernathy Jr.
Littleton

Should be indicted

Marilyn Manson, along with all other purveyors of filth and violence, Hollywood in particular, should be indicted for murder, convicted and executed.

Brian J. Monahan
Littleton

Not in favor now

Who is in favor of a concealed-weapons law now? I wasn't before Tuesday, and I'm certainly not now!

Gay E. Moore
New Castle

How many, I wonder

Ahhh, but how many would have been saved if just one adult had had a gun?

Dick Valentine
Denver

TRAGEDY AT COLUMBINE

Is a gun culture what America truly wants?

Tuesday's horror at Columbine High School is not an aberration. It is part of a pattern and a national tragedy we don't want to face. America's glorification of violence and guns — in the movies, on TV and via the National Rifle Association — has come home to roost, and truly home for us in Colorado.

Our culture and its obsession with explosives and gunfire are making murderers of our kids. The simplest of disputes, which in the past might have ended in a fist fight, are now often settled with a firearm. The media and Hollywood feed on this cultural sickness, virtually encouraging this spiral of mayhem.

So, in the face of this, what are our legislators doing to combat the epidemic of violence? Selling out to the NRA to make certain that there are ever more weapons circulating in society. They would have us believe that the proliferation of weaponry will make us safer, but we can now see they are dead wrong.

Is a gun culture really what America wants? We who abhor these developments have a chance to be recognized. When Charlton Heston and the NRA bring their gun show to Denver soon, perhaps the people, not our bought-and-paid-for government, will stand up to them and make a statement against violence the whole country can hear.

Mark Rucker
Boulder

■

The problem is intent, not guns themselves

The tragedy that unfolded at Columbine High School will surely bring a renewed clamor for gun control as an alleged solution to a very real social problem in this nation.

The two gunmen were reported to have: 1) used a sawed-off shotgun, already illegal to possess; 2) carried semi-automatic pistols, although a state law enacted in recent years forbids the possession of a handgun by minors; 3) carried firearms to school, although it is an illegal act; 4) committed murder, which has long been illegal; 5) illegally carried concealed weapons into the school; 6) and planted pipe bombs, an already illegal act. Would they have been all that concerned about laws making it illegal to possess a firearm should such a law exist?

It is people who illegally carry concealed weapons with criminal intent who create the social chaos. People who would legally carry a concealed weapon would not use the weapon to commit a crime because they have respect for the laws. The problem is with the incivility of people with criminal intent in mind, not the possession of firearms.

Richard Becker
Broomfield

■

There's more than enough blame to spread around

There will be a lot of discussion about who is responsible for the tragic shooting at Columbine High School. Some will blame the parents of the shooters. Others will blame the school system. More will blame the shooters themselves. There is more than enough blame to go around, and it all is probably correctly placed. Yet, I am afraid that many will not look at where, in my opinion, the real blame should be placed.

Over the past several years government at all levels has decreased funding for agencies that provide mental health services to troubled youth. In Colorado it is nearly impossible to get help for young people. Yet, government at all levels does all it can to grant huge tax relief to corporations, thus ensuring even less money is available to provide badly needed services to citizens while helping to maximize corporate profits.

The entertainment industry tries to con us into believing that violent songs, movies and video games have no impact on our youth. Anyone with a brain knows better. The corporations, however, continue to ply the vulnerable with their filth solely to increase their bottom line, with no sense of moral responsibility.

The time is long past due to question why profit and lower taxes are more important then people. We need to ask why hatred is acceptable. Until we change our basic outlook, we, as a society, bear complete responsibility whenever events like Columbine High occur.

Paul Erickson
Littleton

■

Cowardly performance by police was disgusting

If I were a member of the four SWAT teams that responded to the Columbine High School massacre, I would resign. This also goes for the police who first arrived on the scene. Their cowardly performance was disgusting.

As a retired member of the armed forces, I recall vividly the firsthand accounts of brave soldiers, who during World War II, Korea and Vietnam, without body armor and with disregard for their own safety, charged enemy machine gun nests to set free millions of foreigners they didn't even know. Many lost their lives.

To watch more than 200 heavily armed SWAT team and other police officers in body armor, standing around discussing strategy, while hundreds of children were trapped inside, was painful. Where were the heroes? How many victims bled to death while the police waited to act? Where were the handful who would charge into the building to maybe, just maybe, save someone's life? Instead, they cringed behind fire trucks, heavy equipment, buildings, cars and armored vehicles — all because of two teenaged gunmen.

Cecil H. Rigsby
Austin, Texas

■

We cannot be neutral regarding right, wrong

As the father of four sons who attended Columbine High School, I watched Tuesday's tragedy on TV in shock. I am sure the "whys" of this tragedy will be the subject of debate for many weeks to come.

Violence has occurred in a number of schools in the recent past, making it somewhat of a characteristic of today's culture. Has the message in the violence of video games and movies cheapened life to the point where acts such as these are an acceptable form of expression to some kids? Has our society glorified violence to the point where it is seen as the solution to every problem? Have we made popularity and acceptance so important to some young people that actions such as this are necessary to impress their friends, and through the media, to impress the country?

Somehow law and order, the cornerstone of our society, is not being conveyed to many of the younger generation. Somewhere the values of popularity and acceptance have gone way beyond their real worth. We must recognize and convey the fact that every human being is important, that each has a contribution to make.

As for values, we cannot be neutral regarding right and wrong. We all must stand for something!

Bob Stamp
Littleton

Some legislators finally recognizing our needs

The senseless devastation at Columbine High School is a sobering reminder that we live in a society that's gone berserk. Some of our state legislators have finally come to the realization that Colorado's law-abiding citizens need the ability to protect themselves and their loved ones.

A concealed-weapons law would not have prevented the tragedy at Columbine. It would, however, give us a chance to survive a vicious attack at a bus stop bench, street corner or while stopped for a red light.

Hopefully, I will live long enough to see the day our "in-justice system" realizes that prisons are for punishment, instead of summer camps for rehabilitation; when violent criminals are dealt with swiftly and permanently; when Hollywood and the music industry stop romanticizing violence; when parents will take the responsibility for teaching their children right from wrong; when "born again" refers to a renewed sense of social consciousness and conviction; when my grandchildren can leave for school in the morning without the fear of not returning home again.

Until then, I'll feel more secure knowing I have the ability to defend myself and my family should it ever become necessary to do so.

Reuben Zeller
Littleton

■

Why couldn't the police have acted more quickly?

After reading your coverage of the shootings at Columbine High School, I'm concerned about some of the police actions not taken Tuesday. The paper clearly stated that the police arrived at 11:35 a.m., then listened for the next hour to gunshots and bombs going off inside the school. My question is why? I was under the impression that the SWAT teams are trained to quickly enter these situations and resolve them. After all, the SWAT team is heavily armed, wears body armor and is specially trained to end crisis situations.

Children were inside the school with no body armor, no training and no way to defend themselves. It strikes me that the police could have done something more quickly to prevent our children from being systematically hunted down and executed as they tried to hide .

Another injustice about this whole investigation is the concern for the crime scene and the total lack of feelings for the families who hadn't had any word on their sons and daughters. As of 9 a.m. Wednesday, the police were still unable to identify the victims and continued to keep parents hostage to their feelings. This is truly a tragedy.

Clayton Smith
Castle Rock

George Kochaniec/Rocky Mountain News

Paramedics prepare to transport a wounded girl to the hospital from the triage scene near Columbine High School Tuesday.

■

Questions of his own

As I listened to some of the dumb questions being asked the parents of the surviving students at Columbine High School, I felt compelled to write this letter and pose my own questions.

Why don't we ask the Supreme Court and the ACLU how they feel about the ban on prayer and discipline in the schools? How do they feel about the lack of respect for life in our society? How do they feel about prisoners' rights?

Did anyone notice where the kids went for comfort and grieving? They went to church, and I venture to say that they would have traded some discipline and prayer in school for what has taken place.

Don Evans
Thornton

■

Let people be heard

I hurt for all the Columbine parents — especially the parents of the students who died, were hurt and, worse of all, the kids who did this.

How can the Colorado legislature now consider loosening gun controls? If the governor and the legislative majority really are Republicans, they should let us vote on it. I know how I'll vote.

Sue G. Saunders
Denver

■

Filled with sympathy

Having been blessed with two hearts, one is filled to capacity with sympathy for the victims' families because of the perpetrators' dastardly act. The second is also filled to capacity with sympathy for the perpetrators' families, who have to live with what happened for the rest of their lives.

Phil Dietrich
Aurora

■

Headline said it all

The page 1 headline ("Heartbreak") on the events at Columbine High School said it all, rounded every corner and expressed the pathos of the nation. Thank you for a job well done.

John M. Cogswell
Denver

TRAGEDY AT COLUMBINE

A little big guy gave up his life in school violence

Bill Johnson

We found each other the same way he'd found Isaiah a little more than a month ago. His was the only other black face in a sea of white ones. He was carrying flowers.

Yes, he knew Isaiah Shoels, Larry Mingo said. Isaiah had befriended him on his first day at Columbine High School March 22. It was the day Larry Mingo transferred from a Denver private school. He remembers it now as though it were an hour ago.

He'd seen no one who looked even remotely like himself, Larry Mingo said. He was getting odd stares. He felt a bit uncomfortable, thinking for a moment that his choice had been a poor one.

But then, Isaiah appeared. "Hi," the short, powerfully built, 18-year-old senior said, extending his hand. "What's your name?"

They were classmates, they both soon learned. Third-period language arts. "This is a great school," Larry Mingo, a sophomore, remembers Isaiah Shoels telling him. "You are going to get along here just fine."

But then, everybody liked Isaiah Shoels. "He was probably the coolest guy in the school," a sophomore, 16-year-old Brian Zimpfer said. "He rode the bus with me every morning, and everyone would want to sit with Isaiah because he made people laugh. He always said something funny."

He was a short guy, 15-year-old sophomore Scott Phipps recalled. But, oh. So powerfully built. "Everyone thought he was a midget because he came up to about here," the boy said, holding his hand waist-high.

"But in phys-ed, you could see his power. He could lift two times his body weight. He was — you guys agree with me? — the strongest guy in the school."

He and Larry Mingo were two of about a dozen black kids at the school. It created a bond among them. Isaiah, Larry Mingo now says, probably noticed the unease in his eyes.

Their meeting was a mutual thing, he said. They both approached each other, shook hands, exhaled and breathed normally again.

"We just hung out together ," Larry Mingo said. "I was new, and he did what no one else volunteered to do: He showed me around." It was Isaiah's way. A little big guy so quiet, yet so helpful.

He would often tell Isaiah of the boys in the black trench coats who would walk slowly past him in the hallways, how'd they'd stare at him, never saying anything. Just watching his every move. Sizing him up.

"There are so few blacks in this school, I just thought they were curious about a new black guy being there," Larry Mingo said. "They never said anything. They would just stare. I would look back at them, but nothing ever happened. Really, I didn't think much about it."

They were the weird guys in the school, Isaiah Shoels would counsel him. "Don't worry about it," he remembers Isaiah telling him.

Larry Mingo left the school three minutes before the shooting began. He was on his way, alone, to lunch. He raced back to the school when he learned of the gunfire.

For hours he waited with everyone else outside the school. He'd heard the stories of how the gunmen inside were targeting minorities and athletes — "jocks,' he called them. He thought of Isaiah, and soon learned he was unaccounted for.

On the TV, he saw Isaiah's parents. It was late now, and Isaiah is "a really, really responsible kind of guy," Larry Mingo said. He's the kind who checks with his teachers if he's absent, who always, always calls his parents to let them know where he is.

On Tuesday, there wasn't a word. At 11 o'clock that night, Larry Mingo said, "I just knew."

"He was probably in the library studying during his lunch break. Isaiah was just that kind of guy."

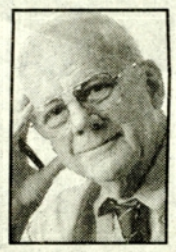
Larry Mingo finally makes it through the horde of news crews, students and others; and approaches the large pile of flowers growing in a park just outside the police tape. He pauses for a long moment before kneeling and placing his on top.

When he rises, four other teen-agers approach him. They wrap their arms around each other's shoulders. Soon, Larry Mingo begins to pray.

"God take care of Isaiah and all of them. Bless our families. Make us stronger."

Bill Johnson's column appears Sunday, Wednesday and Friday. Rockybj@aol.com or (303) 892-2763.

Evil from past casts its shadow



Gene Amole

Outcasts.

Soccer moms, carefully landscaped lawns, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, station wagons, Sony Walkmans, the kids next door, puppies frisking along a fence line, teen-agers lollygagging at Wendy's, others shooting hoops in Clement Park, Adolf Hitler.

That was the bizarre mosaic Tuesday near Columbine High School. Two little Nazis sought a final solution to what they perceived as their problem; minority kids and student athletes.

They chose the 110th anniversary of the birth of Adolf Hitler for their holocaust. Their *Gotterdammerung* came in the school library, where they mercifully committed suicide, as their idol had done nearly 54 years ago.

There is enough blame to go around. The long, black coats they wore symbolize evil in movie after movie. Their guns were easy to come by because our nation is awash with guns designed to do one thing: kill people.

The National Rifle Association decided Wednesday to cancel its meeting in Denver next week. It would have been interesting to see what spin its president, Charlton Heston, put on the tragedy. Would he, as some at the state Capitol did Tuesday, claim that it could have been avoided if the teachers carried concealed weapons?

Is this the best we can do? Do we have to arm our teachers to protect themselves from the students? Concealed-gun advocates have repeatedly characterized the enemy as inner-city thugs, gangsters, dope dealers and common criminals. But what happened Tuesday occurred in one of our lily-white suburbs.

Kids who lack self-esteem seek out each other because of their inability to be accepted by what we think of as normal society. They band together as outcasts to establish their identity.

I suspect that Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris initiated the carnage in a tragic attempt to be noticed, to be feared, to be important, to "go down in flames," to quote Tom Wolfe's book, *A Man in Full.*

We don't know much about their parents, but one has to wonder about the attitude toward Nazi worship adopted by some young people today. It is apparent in the rock music they play, the symbols they adopt and the way they dress. Do parents just ignore this evil as some kind of passing teen-age fad?

A case can be made that some kids behave this way because of a lack of love. Not finding it in their lives, they seek a substitute, a way to attract attention to themselves through fear.

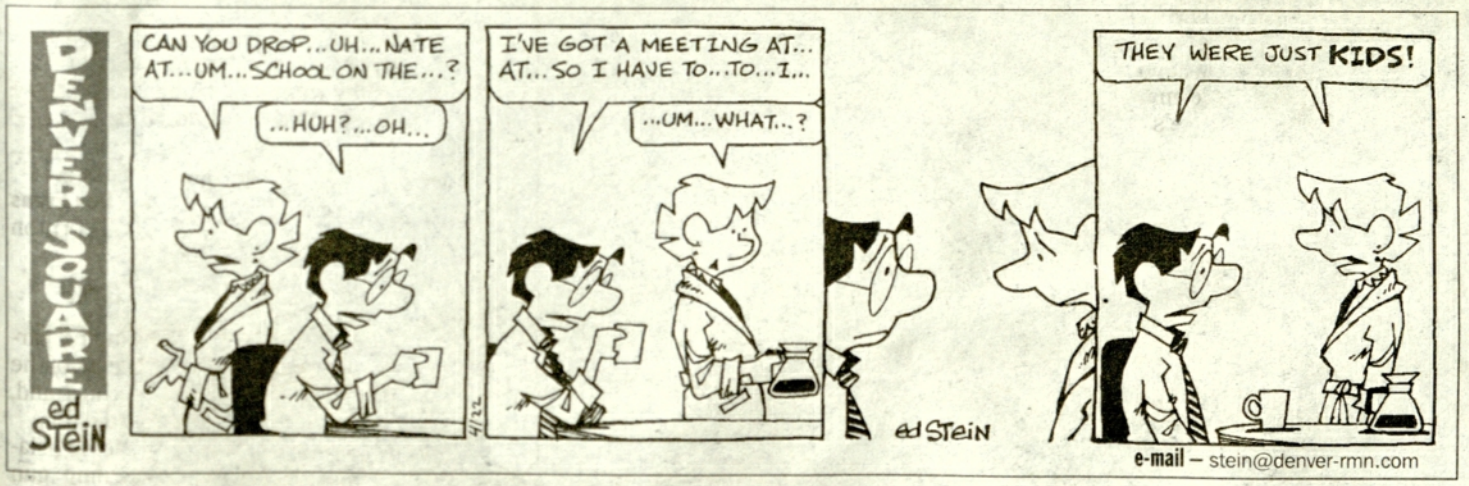
The so-called Trench Coat Mafia is not dissimilar to inner-city street gangs formed as surrogate families. If their families and society reject them, they have each other.

Their strength is rooted in a common belief and in a structure of rules that is inflexible. They create a subculture not unlike those that govern outlaw motorcycle gangs.

High school student bodies are not classless societies. There are the "ins" and the "outs." Cliques form around the most advantaged and attractive kids and the most talented athletes. How painful it is for kids to be left out, to feel they are unwanted and unimportant.

Quote: "Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." — Romans 12:21.

Gene Amole's column appears Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday. (gamole@aol.com)



e-mail – stein@denver-rmn.com

ABC special

ABC will pre-empt the *American Film Institute tribute to Dustin Hoffman* scheduled for 9 tonight (KMGH-Channel 7) to air a 90-minute town hall meeting dealing with the Columbine tragedy.

The program, anchored by Ted Koppel, will be broadcast from Jonesboro, Ark., the site of a previous school shooting.

"We felt it would be inappropriate to come to the Denver area so soon after the tragedy," said ABC News spokeswoman Eileen Murphy. "The wounds are too fresh. However, we might have a satellite presence from the area."

The program will run from 9-10 p.m. and 10:35-11:05 p.m., following Channel 7's local news.

— *Dusty Saunders*

(More news and commentary on the Columbine High School story appear on Page 2D of today's Spotlight section.)

Business trip becomes a terror trip

By Michael Dougan

San Francisco Examiner

Don Jugert was on the tail end of a three-week business trip in Oregon when the store manager said: "You're from Denver? Did you hear what happened?"

Jugert rushed to a radio and listened with horror as the announcers detailed the carnage at suburban Columbine High School — the school his daughters attended.

Did the grim death toll include Angela, a 16-year-old junior, or Valerie, 15, a freshman?

Jugert, 44, a division manager for Napa Auto Parts, jumped on a plane to San Francisco, to catch a connecting flight to Denver. On his way to San Francisco, Jugert had no way of knowing what had happened to his daughters. "I tried calling my wife, but all the lines were busy," he said.

During the flight, Jugert recalled a Saturday two weeks ago when he drove Valerie to school to see if her name was on the freshly posted list of new cheerleaders. She had tried out before but failed to make the cut.

Valerie didn't want to go. She couldn't stand the pain of learning that she had been rejected one more time. Jugert knew differently. He secretly had visited the school at 6 a.m. and found her name on the list.

He sat in the car and shot video of his daughter as she walked hesitantly to the posting and then shrieked with delight at what she saw.

Then he thought about Charlton Heston, his former movie idol, now head of the National Rifle Association. Jugert was an NRA member at one time. He turned in his card several years ago because he didn't like the organization's politics.

"I used to love Charlton Heston," he said. "But I'm always going to have that sick feeling now when I watch him."

Jugert landed at San Francisco International Airport and rushed to a phone kiosk. He called his father in Denver. He called his wife, Char, in Littleton. Finally, he got the words he wanted.

Both daughters were alive and uninjured. He wanted to hug them.

He boarded United Flight 1286, departing at 9:15 p.m. for Denver.

"I'm just glad Valerie didn't have her cheerleader uniform on," he said after takeoff. "I know they would have targeted the cheerleaders."

Valerie knew the group of kids the shooters belonged to — the Trench Coat Mafia. She "just hated those people," said Jugert.

"Even in the face of this unspeakable horror, we live in a state where people come together in times of crisis."

GOV. BILL OWENS

Rodolfo Gonzalez/News Staff Photographer